



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 04 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

Alex Sobel:

[\[160782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies that only 13 per cent of the Additional Restrictions Grant has been paid out to eligible businesses as of 17 January 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government is working closely with Local Authorities in England to support the implementation of business grants during the Covid-19 pandemic and monitor the distribution of grant funds.

Local Authorities are entitled to use their allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant until the end of financial year 2021/22.

The data published on GOV.UK regarding the Additional Restrictions Grant is based upon self-reporting by Local Authorities up to the 17th January 2021.

Further data will be published in due course that will set out performance figures for the current period of national restrictions.

■ Additional Restrictions Grant and Local Restrictions Support Grant

Alex Sobel:

[\[160784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of local authorities in respect of the distribution of the (a) Local Restrictions Support Grants and (b) Additional Restrictions Grant.

Paul Scully:

The Government is working closely with Local Authorities in England to support the implementation of business grants during the Covid-19 pandemic and monitor the distribution of grant funds.

Throughout the pandemic officials have engaged with Local Authorities including through a Local Government Working Group. As the range of grants available has increased, officials have carried out live stream sessions with all 314 Local Authorities managing grant schemes, to provide the latest guidance and respond to questions.

In addition, Ministers have met with Local Authority Leaders and senior officers to discuss ways of improving grant delivery. Information from these discussions has informed work on streamlining existing grants processes and future grants design.

Officials have published guidance for both the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) and the Additional Restrictions Grant to support the distribution of funds to businesses. In addition to the scheme guidance, we publish Frequently Asked Questions documents to help Local Authorities with their administration of grant schemes.

Officials continue to engage with Local Authorities to ensure compliance to both the scheme rules and wider reporting requirements.

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[160555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will recommend to Cabinet colleagues the formal inclusion of 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.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[\[160783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies that only 54 per cent of the mandatory grants given to businesses that have been required to close due to the covid-19 outbreak have been paid out to eligible businesses as of 17 January 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government is working closely with local authorities in England to support the implementation of business grants during the Covid-19 pandemic and monitor the distribution of grant funds.

The data published on GOV.UK regarding the Additional Restrictions Grant is based upon self-reporting by Local Authorities up to the 17th January 2021. The time period in question includes periods of localised restrictions, which saw many Local Authorities moved quickly between Tiers, complicating the administrative process as business eligibility for grants changed alongside Tiers.

Further data will be published in due course that will set out performance figures for the current period of national restrictions where there has been a consistent grant offer for local authorities to administer.

■ Clothing: Exports**Theresa Villiers:** [\[160565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support fashion businesses that are having difficulties complying with new customs requirements for export to the EU.

Paul Scully:

We are working closely with the fashion and textiles sector to ensure businesses get the support they need around specific aspects of our new trading relationship with the EU.

We are operating export helplines, running webinars with policy experts and offering businesses support via our network of 300 international trade advisers. In addition, we invested millions to expand the customs intermediaries sector.

■ Coal: Cumbria**Bill Esterson:** [\[160641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the viability of coal from the proposed new coal mine in Cumbria for use in UK industrial processes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

West Cumbria Mining confirmed in their planning application (<https://planning.cumbria.gov.uk/Planning/Display/4/17/9007>) that, following a review of their refining process, 100% of the coal retrieved would meet the specification for premium metallurgical coal.

Bill Esterson: [\[160642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on coal imports of using coal mined from the proposed mine in Cumbria.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

There is a global market for coking coal through which UK steel producers can source material at competitive prices and currently the majority of coking coal used at the UK's two blast furnace sites (British Steel at Scunthorpe and Tata Steel at Port Talbot) is imported.

In their planning application to Cumbria County Council (<https://planning.cumbria.gov.uk/Planning/Display/4/17/9007>), West Cumbria Mining have stated that 360,000 tonnes per annum of premium metallurgical coal produced at the mine will be destined for use in the UK steel industry.

■ Consumer Goods: Origin Marking

Fleur Anderson: [\[160830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the country of origin to be displayed on (a) textiles and (b) other consumer goods.

Paul Scully:

Under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, traders are banned from using misleading statements about the geographical or commercial origin of products including in response to requests for information by consumers. Aside from certain specified products such as food there is no requirement for goods to be labelled with their country of origin. The Government does not have plans to introduce such a requirement.

■ Directors

Peter Grant: [\[160733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of sanctions available to the Registrar of Companies in the event of repeated failures by company directors to meet statutory deadlines for submitting documents to Companies House.

Paul Scully:

A range of fines and criminal sanctions attaches to the late filing of statutory documents with Companies House, where compliance is monitored on an ongoing basis. Compliance rates suggest that the existing regime provides an appropriate balance between incentivising adherence to filing deadlines and penalising those who fail to meet them

■ Paula Vennells

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[160543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish all correspondence between Paula Vennells and his Department dated between July 2013 and December 2013.

Paul Scully:

BEIS officials have assessed that publication of the correspondence between Paula Vennells and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy dated between July 2013 and December 2013 can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra: [\[160675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fiscal support he is providing to hairdressing businesses in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We have put in place one of the most generous packages of support in the world, worth over £280 billion. For hairdressing businesses, this includes a business rates holiday, various loans schemes and the extended furlough scheme. Closed businesses such as hairdressers can currently receive a grant of up to £3,000 a month and a one-off payment up to a maximum £9,000.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has also announced an additional one-off 'Restart Grants' for businesses, including for the personal care sector in England. This new Restart Grants Scheme will provide up to £18,000 for business premises in the sector.

■ Rolls Royce: Rotherham**Sarah Champion:**[\[160676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) funding from the public purse and (b) tax incentives have been provided to Rolls Royce to support the development of that company's facility in Rotherham.

Paul Scully:

The Government provided £15.43m of grant support through the Grant for Business investment for the construction of a new facility to manufacture single crystal turbine aerofoils at the Advanced Manufacturing Park, Rotherham.

■ UK Trade with EU**Rachel Reeves:**[\[160633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many meetings the Government has had with UK businesses on how they adapt to the new UK-EU trading relationships since the end of the transition period.

Paul Scully:

The Government has extensive engagement with businesses of all sizes, trade associations and business representative organisations. Engagement for the transition period supports the Government's public information campaign to inform businesses and citizens of the actions they need to take now we have left the EU. Since October last year, BEIS has contacted over 4.7 million businesses. This engagement includes letters, meetings, webinars, and email bulletins.

■ Unite: Annual Reports**John Spellar:**[\[160530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to his Answer of 25 February 2020 to Question 156255 on Certification Officer, whether the Labour Market Director in his Department made an assessment of the effect of non-publication of the 2019 accounts of Unite the Union on the Certification Office website on compliance with section 32 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992.

Paul Scully:

Section 32 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 places an obligation on trade unions to submit an annual return to the Certification Officer, and requires the Certification Officer to keep that annual return available for public inspection. Unite the Union have provided the Certification Officer with an annual return. This annual return will be published on the Certification Officer website in due course. A copy of that return is available to members of the public on application to the Certification Officer.

■ Vaccination: Clinical Trials**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[160519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to encourage more clinical trials of vaccines in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK has an existing national clinical trial infrastructure, which has enabled a rapid rollout of new clinical trials, such as that for the Oxford/AstraZeneca, Novavax, Janssen, and Valneva vaccines. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) provides support and critical infrastructure for clinical trials, making the UK well-suited to facilitate clinical trials that are essential to the development of any vaccine.

The Government launched an NHS service in July 2020 to enable people across the UK to sign up to participate in COVID-19 vaccine trials. The NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry, developed in partnership with NHS Digital, has helped to facilitate the rapid recruitment of large numbers of people into trials. As of 2 March 2021, over 453,000 individuals have signed up to the vaccine registry.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Miss Sarah Dines:**[\[912871\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to support family life during the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

The clergy have continued to support families and vulnerable people throughout the pandemic, but particular attention has been given to the bereaved in this very difficult year. Recent research by the Church of England has shown six out of ten people have lost someone they know in the last year and that those aged 18 to 30 have been particularly badly affected. In addition to its support for bereaved families in communities across the country, the Church of England has continued its work preparing couples for marriage. The Church will be supporting National Marriage Week and there are lots of resources available to the parishes.

The Church is pleased to be working with the Government to implement changes to marriage registration, the new regulations will come into force from the 4th of May allowing any parent of a bride and groom to have their names entered into the official register of marriages. This reform among several others in the new regulations will specifically enable mothers to be recognised equally to fathers on the certificate. I want to pay tribute to my predecessor Dame Caroline Spelman, Tim Loughton MP and the Lord Bishop of St Albans who along with the campaigners worked so hard to change the law.

■ Families: Coronavirus

Miriam Cates:

[\[912877\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to support family life during the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England is waiting to hear from the Government when its parent and toddler groups will be able to recommence in person, it is hoped that this will be from the 12th of April.

Many churches have tried new ways to continue their support for young families and children throughout the pandemic. At different stages of the pandemic, families needed different levels of support. The Church has seen some successful examples: using social media and Facebook live to hold parent support groups, using Zoom to hold a community storytime and craft group, and hosting socially distanced family picnics.

For older children and parents, the Church launched 'Faith at Home' to focus on inspirational experiences, using age-appropriate resources to grow together in faith. It has been an effective way to use schools, church leaders and chaplains to support young peoples development.

COP26

■ Biodiversity

Ruth Jones:

[\[151842\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent steps he has taken to promote tackling biodiversity loss alongside climate action as part of COP26 preparations.

Alok Sharma:

Through our COP26 Nature Campaign, we are advancing work in four core areas: tackling the drivers of deforestation, promoting sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, mobilising increased and more targeted finance for nature, and driving political ambition on nature.

We have already made good progress. For example, the UK pioneered the 'Leaders' Pledge for Nature', which now has over 80 signatories. The pledge sets out ten urgent actions to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030 and cements the links between biodiversity loss and climate change.

More recently, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will commit at least £3 billion to climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over five years.

We have also established the FACT (Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade) Dialogue to protect forests and biodiversity, while promoting trade.

■ Carbon Emissions

Alexander Stafford:

[\[152676\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to promote the UK's Net Zero transition model to international partners in the run-up to the COP26 summit.

Alok Sharma:

The Government is determined to use the UK's presidency of COP26 and as host of the G7 to promote ambitious action to deliver the transformational change required by the Paris Agreement.

We are urging all countries to submit ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions, transformational Long-Term Strategies, and to come forward with new net zero and adaptation commitments. Through our COP26 campaigns, we are bringing together governments, business and civil society to work together to accelerate the global transition to net zero.

As demonstrated at the Climate Ambition Summit last December, the UK's own success has shown how countries can grow their economies while at the same time reducing emissions. Ahead of COP26, we are setting out ambitious plans across key sectors of the economy to continue to meet our carbon budgets and our net zero target.

■ Flood Control: Coastal Areas

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153209\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking as COP President to focus UK climate adaptation on flooding and coastal defences as part of the COP26 adaptation and resilience agenda.

Alok Sharma:

In July 2020, the government published a Long-Term Policy Statement which sets out our ambition to make the UK more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement includes five policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion.

The government is investing a record £5.2 billion to build 2,000 new flood defences over the next 6 years which will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion. Long-term investment decisions should follow an adaptive approach which takes account of climate and demographic change over time to enable decision makers to identify the best combination of resilience actions and the right time to act and invest.

We are also investing an additional £200 million to further explore actions that will improve the resilience of communities at risk of flooding and coastal change.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021

Dan Jarvis: [R] [\[156399\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what progress he has made on including the Mayoral Advisory Panel in the preparations for COP26.

Alok Sharma:

I have set up the UK Mayors and Regions Advisory Council with mayors and local leaders from across the UK and which had its first meeting last year. I look forward to engaging with the group on our plans for COP26 at our upcoming meeting. Local leaders will have a key role in reaching communities as part of Together for Our Planet and supporting us to make this an 'All of Society COP'.

DEFENCE

■ A400M Aircraft and Hercules Aircraft

Sir Mike Penning: [[160578](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157035, what estimate he has made of the cost of upgrading the A400M to undertake the roles and duties of C-130J fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 1 March 2021 in response to Question 157035.

Attachments:

1. 157035 - A400M Aircraft [157035 - A400M Aircraft.docx]

■ Aircraft Carriers: Early Warning Systems

Mr Kevan Jones: [[160544](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 154817, when Crowsnest will be fully operational.

Jeremy Quin:

Crowsnest is planned to reach Full Operating Capability in 2023.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus**Conor McGinn:**[\[160727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of food served in military barracks to armed forces personnel in self-isolation.

Johnny Mercer:

The quality of food provision for Service personnel (SP), whether in isolation or non-isolation, is monitored and assured constantly by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Front-Line Commands. No separate assessment is thus made on the standard of food served to SP in isolation. The standards of food quality are set out in Joint Services Publication 456, Defence Food Quality Standards.

DIO and its Industry Partners have produced guidance on feeding in isolation and are sharing best practice across the regions including undertaking additional assurance checks in collaboration with onsite teams at the point of delivery.

■ Army: North East**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[160542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of reductions in the size of the Army on employment in the North East.

James Heappey:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK continues to have the world-class Armed Forces that it needs and deserves. The full conclusions of the Integrated Review will be published later this month, and the Defence Secretary intends to set out his plans for Defence shortly afterwards.

■ Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Overseas Workers**Dan Jarvis:**[\[160673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Defence People and Veterans of 15 December 2020, Official Report, column 75WH, how many and what proportion of Commonwealth War Graves Commission staff affected by recent changes to contracts of employment have (a) remained in the EU and (b) launched grievances against those changes; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence has been in regular contact with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission regarding the changes to the contractual arrangements for 30 UK staff based in Belgium and France. The Commission have advised that 21 staff have elected to remain in Europe, seven will return to new positions in the UK, and two have chosen to retire. Six of these staff have raised grievances, which are being addressed internally by the Commission.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Ice Skating: Coronavirus****Brendan Clarke-Smith:**[\[160810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of designating ice rinks as leisure facilities on access to that facility for skaters outside of normal working hours during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government's 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' sets out an ambitious strategy for reducing obesity and includes ensuring the use of appropriate language when associated with unhealthy weight.

In January The Minister of State for Digital and Culture provided evidence to the Women and Equalities Select Committee concerning how media representations can contribute to poor body image. Ministers and officials in my department are committed to reviewing this issue as part of the Online Advertising Programme Review, later this year.

My department also works closely with the Advertising Standards Authority to ensure advertising presenting misleading, exaggerated and irresponsible content is taken down. In 2019 the Advertising Standards Association enhanced their standards through the inclusion of a new rule prohibiting negative gender stereotypes. Ads which pressure the audience to conform to an idealised gender-stereotypical body shape or physical features are likely to breach this rule.

■ Musicians: Coronavirus**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[160569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for freelance DJs dependent on working at events who have been unable to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

DCMS continues to engage with HM Treasury to ensure the needs of our sectors are factored into the developing economic response, and that DCMS sectors, including the live music industry, are supported throughout this time.

The Government recognises the significant challenge the current pandemic poses to many individuals and freelancers working in the music industry, including freelance DJs.

We are working very hard to help freelancers in those sectors access support, including through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and funding from Arts Council England.

The Government has and will continue to look for ways to improve the SEISS grant and existing support.

■ Older People: Loneliness

Ellie Reeves:

[\[160766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will provide additional support to organisations working to tackle loneliness and isolation amongst older people in Budget 2021.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Spring Budget did not include additional support specifically for organisations working to tackle loneliness and isolation amongst older people.

The government has rolled out a substantial package of support which has been available to charities and the wider voluntary sector. Together with the sector-specific £750million package and pan economy measures such as the furlough scheme, the VCSE sector has accessed a multi-billion pound package of support. This has helped to ensure that organisations at risk of financial hardship have been able to continue their vital work supporting the country during the coronavirus outbreak.

As part of this package of support, we have provided over £30 million this financial year to organisations which support people experiencing loneliness or social isolation. Most recently we launched the £4 million Local Connections Fund, made up of £2 million from government and £2 million from the National Lottery Community Fund, supporting small local organisations tackling loneliness. A second round of this funding will open later this year.

■ Social Media: Disinformation

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[160562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of content the Counter Disinformation Cell flagged to social media platforms in 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[160563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of content his Department's Rapid Response Unit flagged to social media platforms in 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinéage:

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

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

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

EDUCATION

■ Extended Services

Layla Moran:

[\[160781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications of the Department of Education's recent survey of wraparound care providers that are registered under Ofsted for (a) his policies and (b) UK businesses.

Vicky Ford:

We fully recognise that ensuring there is sufficient wraparound childcare in the future is crucial for working parents, as well as vulnerable children and young people, both in the short and longer-term, when more parents and carers start returning to workplaces. We also recognise that this will impact upon UK businesses which is why, on 26 January 2021, we issued a survey to up to 2,000 Ofsted registered providers nationwide.

The objectives of the survey were to gain a better understanding of how providers of wraparound childcare have been affected by the national COVID-19 restrictions and, in particular, the most recent lockdown announced on 4 January 2020, to establish what this means for the provision they are currently offering. This analysis of this data is in progress and will help inform the department's ongoing response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition, since June 2020, we have been in close communication with various stakeholders, including several wraparound providers, to understand the specific challenges that they face, and to determine how we can most effectively support the sector to ensure that adequate wraparound childcare provision remains in place for those most in need.

We recognise the value the wraparound childcare sector offers in terms of supporting children and young people's general wellbeing and the positive effects it can have on their mental health through the enriching social opportunities it provides. Given the valuable support this sector can provide, the government has ensured that before

and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings have been able to stay open for all children eligible to attend school on-site, and during the national lockdown for vulnerable children and young people, as well as the children of critical workers. We have also published protective measures guidance for the sector, to ensure they can offer this provision as safely as possible, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. In addition, we have a full roadmap to reopening, as set out in 'COVID response – Spring 2021', available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>.

■ Northern College Barnsley

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[160672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the future sustainability of residential provision at Northern College in Barnsley.

Gillian Keegan:

Due to concerns with Northern College's future financial situation, the Further Education Commissioner undertook a diagnostic assessment of the college on 15 and 16 February.

Recommendations in the Commissioner's report will include actions the college needs to take to explore structural change in order to secure a sustainable delivery model. The Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency will work with the leadership at Northern College as they consider these options and their plans for improving the financial stability of the college. They will also work with both combined authorities to ensure they are closely sighted on steps taken to try and secure a sustainable financial future for the college.

Northern College receives the majority of its funding through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). This budget will be devolved to Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Combined Authority from August 2021 and it will be for the two combined authorities to agree the value of the AEB that Northern College will receive. This income will be key to the financial sustainability of the college.

The specific steps the department will take will emerge over the next few weeks and officials will ensure that both combined authorities are kept informed.

■ Pupils: Mental Health Services

Theresa Villiers:

[\[160567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to make additional support available for mental health provision for school pupils in response to anxiety caused by covid-19-related disruption.

Vicky Ford:

I refer my right hon. Friend, the Member for Chipping Barnet, to the answer I gave on 25 February 2021 to Question [156401](#).

■ **Sixth Form Education: Finance****Helen Hayes:**[\[160749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for sixth form students.

Gillian Keegan:

I refer the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood to the answer I gave on 25 February 2021 to Question [156536](#).

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[912951\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Environment Agency on flood defences in Prestolee, Bolton.

Rebecca Pow:

The proposed Prestolee and Stoneclough flood scheme will protect approximately 80 homes in the community of Prestolee. The scheme is at the design stage and an outline business case is being developed. The total overall cost is likely to be around £3 million to £5 million, and a sizeable amount of investment has already been raised. The Environment Agency hopes to begin construction by spring 2023, completing works before March 2024.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[912953\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on tackling food poverty and insecurity during lockdown.

Victoria Prentis:

The Ministerial Taskforce I chaired has helped put in place support for the most vulnerable in our society throughout this pandemic. Whilst initially concerned with physical access to food during lockdown, we quickly shifted focus to tackling economic insecurities. This work carries on across the Government, and will continue to be a priority this year, and we look forward to responding to Henry Dimbleby's review of our food strategy.

Rosie Cooper:[\[912955\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that (a) funding and (b) regulations are in place to help protect (i) the River Tawd and (ii) similar natural environments from pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency has secured funding to commence an investigation into sources of pollution in the River Tawd. We are tackling river pollution from poor farming practice with regulation, financial incentives and educational schemes for farmers. In addition to Government investment in many local improvement schemes, water company investment is increasing to £4.6 billion between 2020-2025. A task force comprising the Government and water companies is addressing the problem of sewage discharge from storm overflows.

Dame Diana Johnson:[\[912956\]](#)

What steps he is taking to secure long-term funding for nature-based flooding solutions.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government sees nature-based solutions playing an increasing role in our effort to reduce flood risk, alongside traditional flood defences, in our £5.2 billion capital flood defence programme as well as through the £200 million innovation programme. These will run for the next six years. In addition, the Government's ongoing investment in the environment, such as the Nature for Climate Fund and our environmental land management schemes, will also support natural flood management measures.

■ Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[155074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the proportion of agricultural goods moving from Great Britain to the EU after 21 April 2021 on which physical checks will be required at border control posts.

Victoria Prentis:

New EU rules will apply from April 21, 2021 that will impact on traders who export certain animals, germinal products and products of animal origin, including composites. The EU has not published all of the details; however, we are not aware of any changes to the rate of physical checks that will take place at the EU border. These are set out in existing EU rules. The new rules will mean that certain products that do not currently require an Export Health Certificate, and therefore are not subject to checks, will require certification. These will be subject to physical checks at the rates currently outlined in EU regulation. We will continue to speak with the European Commission further to understand what their rules will mean for exporters.

■ Asia-Pacific Region: Fish**John Spellar:**[\[154740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking (a) separately and (b) with countries in the Asia-Pacific region to help maintain fish stocks in that region.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is taking action on a number of international fisheries issues alongside our international counterparts including from the Asia-Pacific region. These include, but are not limited to, playing a leading role in the global fight to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, and engaging proactively in the work of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, to which many Asia-Pacific countries are also party, to ensure more sustainable management of high seas fisheries and maintain stocks in those waters. We are also participating actively in UN fora such as the Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries, and advocating for the elimination of incentives and harmful subsidies for fisheries that are detrimental to the conservation of marine biodiversity in the ongoing negotiations at the World Trade Organization, and in the context of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

■ **Dogs: Litter****Dan Jarvis:**[\[160674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the steps they are taking to tackle dog fouling.

Rebecca Pow:

Most dog owners conscientiously clean up after their pets. Those who do not leave an unsightly and unhygienic mess which can spoil local spaces that are meant to be enjoyed by all.

Local councils have a duty to ensure that public areas are kept clear of litter and refuse. This includes removing dog faeces from certain types of land.

On behalf of Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has recently published guidance for local authorities and Business Improvement Districts in England on the provision of public bins, which includes a section on dog fouling. *The Right Bin in the Right Place* guidance is available at: <https://wrap.org.uk/content/binfrastructure-right-bin-right-place>

In support of this guidance, a £2 million grant scheme has been launched for local authorities in England to apply for capital grants of between £10,000 and £25,000 to purchase new bins. The scheme is being funded by Defra and managed by WRAP.

Councils also have powers to issue Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). PSPOs allow councils to deal with a particular nuisance or problem arising in an area by imposing conditions on the use of that area. For example, a PSPO may be used to exclude dogs from designated spaces such as a children's play area in a park or to require dog owners to pick up their dog's faeces.

Those who breach the terms of a PSPO may be prosecuted in a magistrates' court, which can lead to a criminal record and a fine of up to £1,000 on conviction.

Alternatively, the council can issue a fixed penalty notice of up to £100. It is up to each council to decide how and to what extent they use these powers.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance

Matt Western:

[\[912954\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support farmers producing food for the domestic market.

Victoria Prentis:

From this year we will be offering new productivity support. Farmers will be able to apply for grants to help them invest in equipment and technology and boost their productivity under the Farming Investment Fund.

The Farm Resilience scheme will provide help for the first three years of the agricultural transition period to manage their businesses through the transition. It will ensure experts are on hand to provide any advice and support needed.

■ Litter

Dan Jarvis:

[\[160671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to make financial support available for schools to fund preventative measures to tackle (a) dog fouling and (b) littering in the vicinity of schools.

Rebecca Pow:

Local councils are responsible for keeping their public land clear of litter and refuse; which may include land in the vicinity of schools. The role of central Government is to enable and support this local action: providing a clear legal framework of rights, responsibilities and powers, setting national standards and, where possible, making sure that the costs of dealing with litter issues are passed to those responsible for causing the problem.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) have launched a £2m grant scheme for local authorities in England to apply for capital grants of between £10,000 and £25,000 to purchase new bins. This scheme is being funded by Defra.

The Department for Education funds schools so they are able to carry out statutory duties, including to keep school estates clear of litter and refuse. School funding is increasing significantly over the next three years, with the largest cash boost for schools in a decade. Core school funding is increasing by £2.6 billion in 2020-21, and will increase by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20.

Around 80% of schools in England participate in the Eco-Schools programme, run in England by Keep Britain Tidy. This programme encourages pupils, parents and teachers to improve sustainability and reduce litter and waste in their schools and communities. That number of schools participating in this programme is growing, putting young people at the heart of environmental issues.

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:**[\[157018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of (a) 26 November 2020, (b) 5 January 2021 and (c) 10 February 2021 on constituency case reference JB30163 MC2020/31397.

Rebecca Pow:

A reply to the hon. Member is being prepared and will be issued very shortly. I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member.

■ Nature Conservation**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[157173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to deliver on commitments made as part of the Leaders' Pledge for Nature at the United Nations General Assembly.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government is committed to working with partners around the world to implement the ten commitments under the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, which the UK co-created. To demonstrate our dedication to delivering on the Pledge commitments, in January 2021, the Prime Minister committed to spending at least £3 billion of the UK's International Climate Finance over the next five years, on climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity.

As you will be aware, Lord Goldsmith wrote to the devolved administrations prior to the Pledge's launch to seek their support. I am grateful for the support of the Scottish Government, as signalled in their recently published 'Statement of Intent' on post-2020 biodiversity, and I am also grateful to the Welsh Government for their support.

In line with Pledge commitments, the UK Government is taking strong action on nature domestically as well as internationally. The environment is a devolved policy area and, in England, we are maintaining and extending key protections; introducing new legislation and new funding streams; we are supporting partnerships and we are working across Government to secure broad action. We have, for example, brought forward the first Environment Bill for more than 20 years which, alongside our strengthened Agriculture and Fisheries Acts, sets a new legal foundation for government action to improve the environment.

■ Odour Pollution: Complaints**Aaron Bell:**[\[160854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many odour complaints have been received about each site regulated by the Environment Agency in each month since November 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

Since November 2020, the Environment Agency (EA) has received substantiated reports of odour incidents at around 50 sites which it regulates.

Table 1 shows the total number of notifications made to the EA in relation to odour in each month since November 2020. This may include a number of notifications that following investigation may be determined not to fall within the remit of the EA. The majority will be associated with sites that the EA regulates.

Table 1. Total odour notifications made to the Environment Agency

NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	JANUARY 2021	FEBRUARY 2021	
Total odour notifications	1051	1261	2602	4556

Table 2 shows the number of odour incidents which have been substantiated and linked to sites that the EA regulates, in each month since November 2020. It also includes the number of additional notifications associated with each substantiated incident, where a single incident has received multiple notifications. Due to potential ongoing investigations into these incidents the sites have been anonymised. The data in table 2 is taken from a live system and is subject to change as additional incident information is recorded and the data is further quality assured.

Table 2. Substantiated odour incidents at sites regulated by the Environment Agency

	NOVEMBER 2020		DECEMBER 2020		JANUARY 2021		FEBRUARY 2021	
	Incident s	Duplicates (additional notification s)	Incident s	Duplicates (additional notification s)	Incident s	Duplicates (additional notification s)	Incident s	Duplicates (additional notification s)
Site 1			1	3				
Site 2	1	0						
Site 3	1	22						
Site 4							1	0
Site 1	1	0	1	0				

	NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	JANUARY 2021	FEBRUARY 2021
e 5				
Sit 1 e 6	5			
Sit 1 e 7	26			
Sit e 8		1 2		
Sit 1 e 9	1	1 1		1 0
Sit e 10		1 7	1 3	
Sit 1 e 11	8			
Sit e 12		1 0		
Sit e 13		1 4		
Sit 1 e 14	2		1 6	
Sit e 15		1 12		1 0
Sit e 16		1 0		
Sit e 17		1 6	1 2	
Sit				1 0

	NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	JANUARY 2021	FEBRUARY 2021
e 18				
Sit 1 e 19	1			
Sit e 20		1 0		
Sit 3 e 21	0	3 0		1 0
Sit 1 e 22	0			
Sit 1 e 23	1			
Sit e 24		1 1		
Sit e 25			1 6	
Sit e 26			1 56	
Sit e 27		2 0		1 0
Sit 1 e 28	34			
Sit e 29				1 4

	NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	JANUARY 2021	FEBRUARY 2021	
Sit 1 e 30	1				
Sit 1 e 31	2	1	17	1	26
Sit 1 e 32	0				
Sit 1 e 33	0	1	2	1	0
Sit e 34		1	14		
Sit e 35				1	0
Sit 1 e 36	0	1	0		
Sit 2 e 37	1	2	7		
Sit 1 e 38	196	2	494	6	1918
Sit e 39		1	0		
Sit e 40		1	1		
Sit 1 e	0	1	0		

	NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	JANUARY 2021	FEBRUARY 2021
41				
Sit e			3	0
42				
Sit e		1	8	1
43				
Sit 1 e	2			
44				
Sit 1 e	3			
45				
Sit e		1	0	
46				
Sit e		1	1	
47				
Sit 1 e	0			
48				
Sit e			1	0
49				
Sit e		1	0	
50				

■ **Walley's Quarry Landfill: Odour Pollution**

Aaron Bell:

[160853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many odour complaints have been received by the Environment Agency about Walley's Quarry Landfill in Newcastle-under-Lyme, each day since 1 November 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

The information will be placed in the Library.

Aaron Bell:[\[160855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of odour complaints about Walley's Quarry landfill in the last six months; and what assessment he has made on the acceptability of the level and type of odour arising from its operations.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) received 6938 odour complaints relating to Walley's Quarry Landfill in the last six months, including a significant increase since December 2020.

The EA is completing regular odour assessments within the local area and undertaking more frequent assessments at locations where it receives the most complaints. Over the last six months the EA has completed 28 amenity assessments and formally visited the site on nine occasions. It has also completed seven procedure and report reviews.

Trained EA officers have detected odour at some locations but could not substantiate reports at a level considered to be of annoyance. The EA will continue with odour assessments and visits to ensure all measures are being used to minimise odour impacting local residents.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Coronavirus****Alicia Kearns:**[\[159376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of recent claims made by the COVAX facility in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina's vaccine distribution capability; and what steps he is taking with international partners to support vaccine delivery in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Wendy Morton:

COVAX is the key multilateral mechanism for delivering global equitable access to vaccines, and hopes to deliver two billion doses to 192 countries in less than a year. It has been working with its members - including Bosnia and Herzegovina - on distribution and roll-out plans, and has recently announced the first tranche of vaccine allocations, which will provide protection to the most vulnerable across the globe. We understand Bosnia and Herzegovina will receive both Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines in the coming months as part of this first tranche. It is for members to work with COVAX directly, where appropriate involving relevant partners such as regional bodies, on procurement, delivery and distribution of doses. The UK will continue to put equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines at the heart of our international approach. We remain a leading supporter of COVAX and,

having already contributed £548 million, I am pleased to say we are one of the largest donors to its Advanced Market Commitment, which provides donor-funded vaccine doses to the 92 most vulnerable countries.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Kate Osamor:

[\[158993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the cost of the surplus covid-19 vaccine doses for low income countries will be met by the UK.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any future excess COVID-19 vaccines from our supply with the COVAX international vaccine procurement pool. However, it is still too soon to say when we will have any surplus doses. Our current priorities are ensuring the safety of the UK population, and making sure that COVAX, the multilateral facility responsible for distributing COVID-19 vaccines, is able to allocate vaccines where they are needed most. We will set out more details on the funding mechanisms and any cost recovery in due course.

■ **Gaza: Coronavirus**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[160595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the reported delay by Israel to the transfer of the first shipment of covid-19 vaccines to Gaza, what recent representations he has made to the Government of Israel to encourage that country to meet its duties under international humanitarian law with regards to access to vaccines in the occupied Palestinian territory.

James Cleverly:

We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to COVID-19, including the arrival of the first shipment of vaccines from the Palestinian Authority into Gaza on 17 February, with the approval of Israel. We encourage further cooperation and dialogue in this regard.

The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised the issue of 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.

■ **Jamal Khashoggi**

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[160728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the the recently declassified report from the US Director of National Intelligence, Assessing the Saudi Government's Role in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi, if

he will take steps to declassify similar intelligence on the Saudi Government's role in the killing of Jamal Jashoggi held by the UK Government and its agencies; and if will he make a statement.

James Cleverly:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on our own intelligence assessments.

The UK has always been clear that Jamal Khashoggi's murder was a terrible crime. We condemn his killing in the strongest possible terms, that is why we have sanctioned twenty Saudi nationals involved in the murder under the global human rights regime.

■ **Nigeria: Fossil Fuels**

Dan Carden:

[\[158188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the total value is of (a) the UK government's proposed investment in the Qua Iboe gas-fired power station in Nigeria through CDC Group's Globeleq subsidiary, (b) CDC Group's current investments in fossil fuel energy in Nigeria and (c) CDC Group's current investments in renewable energy in Nigeria.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance into developing countries in Africa and South Asia since 2017. CDC's climate strategy sets out its comprehensive approach to align all of CDC's investing activities with the Paris Agreement, based on the core principles of reaching net zero by 2050, enabling a just transition and strengthening adaptation and resilience.

CDC's full energy portfolio, as of December 2019, is available online:

<https://assets.cdcgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/11174306/Fossil-Fuels-and-Renewables-portfolio-as-at-31-December-2019-pdf.pdf>.

CDC will only consider new investments in gas power and related infrastructure if they are aligned with the Paris Agreement and aligned with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. Information on CDC's pipeline of investments is commercially sensitive and therefore is unable to be disclosed.

■ **Overseas Aid**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[158854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the merger of his Department with the Department for International Development on the Government's ability to support (a) vulnerable people abroad and (b) the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring a high quality education for all.

Wendy Morton:

The creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has united our world class diplomacy and development expertise into one department. This, alongside reforms to how aid is spent across government, will ensure we bring together the best of Britain's international effort. Our aid budget will continue to serve the primary aim of reducing poverty in developing countries, and the merger enables us to do this in a more influential, coherent, and impactful way.

This applies in the case of UK leadership on SDG 4, and girls' education. Through our combined diplomatic levers, and development expertise and experience, FCDO is rallying the global community to step up its commitment in this area, including through our G7 Presidency and co-hosting of the financing summit for the Global Partnership for Education.

Overseas Aid: Fossil Fuels**Dan Carden:**[\[158189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many legacy investments in fossil fuels within the CDC Group's portfolio have been phased out since 2018.

James Duddridge:

CDC's legacy portfolio comprises investments made by funds committed to before 2012 when major changes to CDC's strategy and investment policy were introduced.

CDC's full energy portfolio, as of December 2019, is available online:

<https://assets.cdcgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/11174306/Fossil-Fuels-and-Renewables-portfolio-as-at-31-December-2019-pdf.pdf>.

Four fossil fuel power investments made through fund investments before 2012 have been exited since 2018.

Sri Lanka: Tamils**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[160618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the Sri Lankan authorities in permitting the rights of the Tamil community to engage in peaceful protest in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is aware of the recent demonstrations that took place in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, and is concerned at reports of intimidating behaviour experienced by some demonstrators. Officials from the British High Commission in Colombo will continue to monitor closely events linked to the right to peaceful protest.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[160619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure that the international community (a)

upholds the rights of Tamils living in Sri Lanka and (b) ensures that Tamils are not subject to (i) prosecution and (ii) state harassment in the event that they engage in peaceful protests in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is working closely with international partners on a new resolution on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council. This resolution will provide a framework for continued international engagement on human rights and post-conflict accountability in Sri Lanka. The resolution will highlight concerns about the protection of minorities, and will call on the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the human rights of people in all of its communities are protected.

The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised the importance of protecting the rights of all communities, including minority groups, on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 9 February and 22 January respectively. We will continue to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka to underline the importance we attach to this issue.

Officials from the British High Commission in Colombo will continue to monitor closely events linked to the right to peaceful protest.

■ **Tigray: Armed Conflict**

Patrick Grady:

[\[160707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the (a) UN and (b) African Union on the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

The UK has been consistent, alongside the UN and international partners, in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. We fully supported efforts by three African Union (AU) appointed envoys last November 2020 to push for peace. The Foreign Secretary has discussed Ethiopia in recent weeks with several African Heads of State and Government, including Kenya as a current UN Security Council member. He also raised these issues when he visited East Africa in January. I [Minister Duddridge] also regularly raise in my engagement. We welcome the visits of three UN Under-Secretaries General to Ethiopia in February, and their engagement with the Government of Ethiopia. As a complement to the efforts of the AU to find sustainable solutions to the conflict in Tigray, we will continue to press these messages with all relevant international partners, including at the UN Security Council where Ethiopia is expected to be discussed again on 4 March.

■ West Bank: Schools

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[160590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help prevent demolitions of schools in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[160591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of schools in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at risk of demolition in the next six months.

James Cleverly:

The UK opposes Israel's proposed demolitions of Palestinian schools and calls on Israel to reconsider its plans to do so. The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February 2021. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about the demolition of Palestinian infrastructure, including the potential demolition of schools, with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October 2020. Data shared with us by our partners in the Education Cluster of relevant NGOs operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, estimates that 45 schools are at risk in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem. 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.

■ Xinjiang: Genocide

Caroline Lucas: [\[157997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on the killing of Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjian; whether he has sought legal advice on whether the criteria set out in the Convention for a genocide determination may have been met; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We 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.

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, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Autism and Learning Disability: Mental Health Services**

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[157158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the cross-departmental strategy to move people with a learning disability and/or autism out of assessment and treatment units.

Helen Whately:

The latest NHS Digital Assuring Transformation data, there has been a 29% reduction in the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist in-patient settings in England since March 2015.

We have established a new Building the right support Delivery Board to oversee implementation of the Building the right support national plan. The Board brings together representatives from Government departments, local government and other organisations with responsibilities for elements of the plan.

■ Body Bags

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[159014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing body bags with a transparent face window which allow families to pay respects to a deceased person while maintaining effective infection control.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: No such assessment has been made.

The care of the deceased guidance has been developed to ensure that the deceased are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect and to ensure that people who need to come into contact with the deceased or who work in services providing care of the deceased are protected from infection. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19#who-this-guidance-is-for>

■ Care Homes: Key Workers

Sally-Ann Hart: [\[150969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of assigning family members of clinically vulnerable or disabled relatives who live in care homes, key worker status; and what steps he is taking to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that vulnerable people have access to support and care from their families.

Helen Whately:

New visiting arrangements will start on 8 March. From that date, every care home will be asked to ensure that each resident can receive regular indoor visits from one person whom they have nominated as their single named visitor. In addition, with the agreement of the care home, visitors to residents who need personal care will have access to the same testing and personal protective equipment as care home staff so that they can provide extra support, like help with washing, dressing or eating.

■ **Coronavirus****Andy McDonald:**[\[160678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Questions 155053 and 155054, what assessment he has made of whether long covid is likely in people without a particular susceptibility.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

COVID-19 is a new disease and therefore it is not yet clear what the physical, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be for those experiencing long-term effects of the virus.

■ **Coronavirus: Canada****Caroline Lucas:**[\[123559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of data from Canada on the effect on the transmission of covid-19 of thanksgiving celebrations in October; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

We regularly engage in discussions with international partners, including Canada, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, no specific assessment has been made on the transmission of COVID-19 and thanksgiving celebrations in Canada.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing****Philip Davies:**[\[142857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 100316 on Coronavirus: Contact Tracing, in what format his Department holds that information.

Helen Whately:

The following table shows the number of people in the Test and Trace Programme at each civil service grade.

GRADE	TOTAL
Administrative Officer	2
Executive Officer	138

GRADE	TOTAL
Higher Executive Officer	399
Senior Executive Officer	212
Grade 7	301
Grade 6	181
Senior Civil Servant Payband 1	108
Senior Civil Servant Payband 2	31
Senior Civil Servant Payband 3	2

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Derek Twigg:

[\[160537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what modelling he has undertaken on the potential effect of the (a) easing of covid-19 restrictions to allow the partial mixing of people and (b) removal of covid-19 restrictions on demand for (i) hospital and (ii) ICU beds; and if he will publish that modelling.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling, Operational sub-group investigated a range of different relaxation scenarios to understand the sensitivities and effect of taking each step in the roadmap. The modelling was iterated over several weeks and included the number of hospital admissions, deaths and level of hospital bed occupancy which might occur.

There is uncertainty on the number of cases, hospital admissions and deaths in each of the modelled scenarios, as it is not possible to precisely predict how people will behave at each stage of relaxation or how that behaviour will affect transmission.

Evidence on the effectiveness of vaccines against severe disease and infection is also still developing.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Jane Hunt:

[\[120172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to procure rapid covid-19 tests to facilitate an increase in visitor access to care homes.

Helen Whately:

All Care Quality Commission-registered adult care homes are receiving lateral flow device (LFDs) test kits to enable safe visits, where permitted.

Care home residents will be able to be visited indoors by a single, named individual from 8 March as part of the Prime Minister's roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions. The scheme will allow a single visitor to spend time indoors with their relative or friend in a care home, and make repeat visits under carefully designed conditions to keep residents, staff and visitors safe

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[113104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many validated cool boxes for the covid-19 vaccine the Government has.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service is working with all stakeholders, including the Department, Public Health England and manufacturers to ensure the NHS has access to equipment with the right specifications based on the latest vaccine characteristics information. This includes balancing the amount of equipment needed based on forecasted vaccine supply and the delivery approaches.

Over 4,500 cool boxes have been purchased to date, with more available from suppliers. These are available on a short lead-time.

Alex Norris: [\[134070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's modelling of the covid-19 vaccination program is based on uptake of 75 per cent outside of (a) care homes, (b) prisons and (c) other settings.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Based on our previous vaccination programmes, specifically seasonal flu, we expected the uptake for the COVID-19 vaccine to be 75% across all cohorts in England. These estimates vary by priority groups, with greater estimated take up rates in higher priority groups. Seasonal flu estimates take into account different settings including prisons and care homes, to determine overall uptake. This fed into our initial estimate of 75% uptake across all cohorts. According to the recent evidence gathered by the Office for National Statistics, the current rate of COVID-19 take-up is 85% of adults across all cohorts.

Catherine West: [\[137264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether data on ethnicity will be recorded as part of the national rollout of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: From 28 January 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published the total number of vaccinations administered by recorded ethnicity at the following link:

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

Hywel Williams:

[\[147753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when (a) UK visa holders and (b) other temporary UK residents who are clinically vulnerable and unable to travel out of the UK due to the risk of contracting covid-19 will be eligible to receive the covid-19 vaccine from UK health authorities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Vaccination against COVID-19 is free to everyone living in the United Kingdom and all overseas visitors to England, regardless of their nationality. While National Health Service numbers form an important part of the administrative process, they are not a pre-condition for being offered a vaccine. For those not registered with a general practitioner, NHS regional and local health and social care systems will contact those individuals to ensure they are offered the vaccine.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[156288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that people with asthma are included in priority group 6 for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: 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. Those with asthma not identified for inclusion in the CEV group, that require continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission, will be vaccinated in priority group six. Adults with mild asthma who do not meet the inclusion criteria would not be included within the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority group six.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[158051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish the guidance given to Clinical Commissioning Groups on vaccinating in-patients in hospitals.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Routine immunisations are predominantly given through primary care settings, therefore there is no guidance given to clinical commissioning groups on vaccinating in-patients in hospitals.

Helen Hayes:

[\[158144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to issue targeted information on the covid-19 vaccine and support to people with learning disabilities to help them access the vaccine as soon as possible.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement's learning disability and autism programme has worked collaboratively across the National

Health Service, Public Health England and other partners to support the delivery of reasonable adjustments in the vaccination programme. This has included a range of training resources for vaccination teams on communicating with people with a learning disability and autistic people. This has also included training resources on making reasonable adjustments, the provision of accessible information, including an easy read vaccination invitation letter and vaccination consent form and production of a film about the COVID-19 vaccine.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[161668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 137116 tabled on 13 January by the Member for Harrow West.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's question will be answered as soon as possible.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[114237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on financial support available to disabled people and carers in non-registered supported living settings.

Helen Whately:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the issues facing social care. We are working closely with the Cabinet Office Disability Unit on the development of a National Strategy for Disabled People. The Strategy will take into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people and will be aimed at improving the lives of disabled people, removing barriers and extending opportunities. The Strategy is expected to be published in spring 2021.

Where someone is living in supported accommodation and is responsible for their own housing costs, they may be eligible to receive benefits, including those to provide a contribution towards the additional costs of disability.

The Government has provided councils with access to over £1 billion of additional funding social care next year. In the longer term, the Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals this year.

■ DNACPR Decisions: Disability**Hilary Benn:**[\[157007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued on the use of do not resuscitate orders relating to (a) people with learning disabilities and (b) disabled people; and whether his Department has revised any such guidance in response to recent reports that do not resuscitate orders are allegedly being applied to individuals without their consent.

Helen Whately:

We have been clear that learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and that blanket DNACPR decisions are completely inappropriate.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued a number of joint statements to health and care providers reiterating that DNACPR decisions must not be applied in a blanket fashion to any group. The 2020/21 General Medical Services (GMS) contract Quality and Outcomes Framework now includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability to be reviewed. We have asked the Care Quality Commission to undertake a review of DNACPR notices issued during the pandemic. This review has started and will report later in 2021.

■ Epilepsy: Pregnancy**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[157274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to immediately extend the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and NHS Digital's Medicines in Pregnancy Valproate Registry to include all anti-epileptic drugs.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[157275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the publication of the Commission on Human Medicines' report, Epilepsy Medicines in Pregnancy on 7 January 2021, what plans he has in place for an awareness raising campaign to inform healthcare professionals and the general public of the risks associated with the use of anti-epileptic drugs taken in pregnancy.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[157276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to increase funding for (a) safer medicines research and (b) ensuring safer medicines for pregnant women with epilepsy in order to limit existing risks around physical and neurodevelopmental harm.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is working with NHS Digital to develop a registry to monitor the use of valproate and compliance with the current regulatory position, and to monitor any children born to women on valproate. A report detailing the findings from the first stage of the registry was published in January. Work is now ongoing to extend the registry to include to women

in the devolved administrations. As recommended in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (IMMDSR), it will be further developed to include all women prescribed an antiepileptic drug. This has been prioritised within the next phase of development.

The conclusions of the Commission on Human Medicines' safety review of epilepsy medicines in pregnancy were communicated publicly to support decisions around the best treatment options for girls and women. These communications were via the MHRA's Drug Safety Update bulletin, an accompanying public assessment report and a patient safety leaflet. A news release and social media accompanied the publication alongside email alerts that targeted relevant healthcare professionals, prescribing publications and professional organisations. The MHRA is also working with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Association of British Neurologists to update relevant clinical guidance to reflect the findings of the review. The impact of this review and the uptake of communications will be monitored and consideration be given to the need for further communications to healthcare professionals.

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funds a range of research in maternal and neonatal health focussing on the safety of maternity and neonatal services, and the national maternity ambition to halve maternal deaths, stillbirths and neonatal deaths and brain injury by 2025. The NIHR has funded three studies on anti-epilepsy medication use during pregnancy. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including safer medicines for pregnant women with epilepsy.

■ Health

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[94332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the proposed reforms to Public Health England will enhance the role of nature-based interventions to support health and wellbeing.

Jo Churchill:

Prevention of ill-health remains a top priority. In July 2020, Environment Secretary George Eustice announced a £4.27 million investment for a cross-government project aimed at preventing and tackling mental ill health through green social prescribing.

The Government will continue its focus on health improvement and preventing ill-health, with support from the expert teams who currently sit in PHE, who will continue with their excellent work. We will be consulting with staff and engaging with an external stakeholder advisory group on where PHE's health improvement functions would be best placed in order to support the public health system in our aim to increase healthy life expectancy.

■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review**Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[160540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on implementing each of recommendations 1-9 inclusive of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report entitled First Do No Harm, published on 8 July 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Cat Smith: [\[161805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report, First Do No Harm, published on 8 July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

My Written Ministerial Statement of 11 January 2021 ([HCWS692](#)) updated hon. Members on current progress on each of the nine recommendations. The Government will respond in full to the report later this year.

■ Learning Disability: Coronavirus**Dr Lisa Cameron:** [\[157157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to promote the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak through (a) accessible communications and (b) ensuring the provision of reasonable adjustments.

Helen Whately:

Access to annual health checks for people with a learning disability remains a key priority for the National Health Service in England during and beyond COVID-19.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have co-produced a range of accessible resources relating to COVID-19 for people with a learning disability, autistic people and their families. Resources include easy read documents, information leaflets and films.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked to support the use of reasonable adjustments in the vaccination programme. This has included providing a range of training resources for vaccination teams on communicating with people with a learning disability and autistic people and making reasonable adjustments to the way vaccines are delivered.

■ Members: Correspondence**Tony Lloyd:** [\[159241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 20 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Rochdale.

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: Gambling**Mark Menzies:**[\[154643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people receiving mental health support for online gambling related issues in the latest period for which data is available.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested as we do not hold data on the number of people receiving mental health support specifically for online gambling related issues.

■ Mental Health Services: Mothers**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[157171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question 115555, on Mental Health Services: Mothers, whether those specialist care services are also provided to women during consultations on abortion.

Helen Whately:

Guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists sets out that healthcare staff caring for women requesting abortion should identify those who require more support in the decision-making process and pathways to additional support, including counselling and social services.

Abortions provided by independent sector abortion providers must meet the Required Standard Operating Procedures (RSOPs) set out in the Department's Procedures for the Approval of Independent Sector Places for the Termination of Pregnancy (Abortion).

■ NHS Test and Trace**Munira Wilson:**[\[127002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £22 billion in funding allocated to NHS Test and Trace is being spent on management consultants.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: 438 million, or 2% of the funding, is allocated to 'professional services' which includes management consultants.

■ NHS: Coronavirus**Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[156993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce a compensation scheme for NHS staff who have acquired long covid.

Helen Whately:

We currently have no plans to do so.

National Health Service staff on national terms and conditions benefit from up to six months of full salary when off sick, followed by up to six months of half salary, depending on length of service. In March 2020 we introduced temporary COVID-19 sick pay for NHS staff, providing an additional level of support to help ensure infection control. NHS terms and conditions also contain Injury Allowance provisions which top up sick pay further for eligible staff where illness or injury is work related.

■ Patient Recruitment Centres**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[160517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria the National Institute for Health Research used to select the sites for the National Patient Recruitment Centres; and what steps his Department plans to take to (a) evaluate the effectiveness of those centres and (b) publish that information.

Edward Argar:

The designation of individual Patient Recruitment Centres (PRC) was undertaken following an open competition in which applications were assessed by an independent panel against the following criteria:

- A proven track record in the delivery of late-phase commercial research;
- Demonstration of excellence in corporate governance and financial control;
- A proven culture of patient-focused research;
- Demonstration of a strategic commitment to the delivery of late-phase commercial research;
- The development of commercial sustainability and a proven track record of effective cross-sector partnership working;
- An understanding of the importance to United Kingdom Plc competitiveness of fair, consistent and timely contracting and costing;
- Systems and processes to support excellence in information governance and data management; and
- Systems and processes to support excellence in contract management.

Each PRC has a contract with defined contractual management arrangements in place through the National Institute of Health Research. This includes a post-contract review on progress against objectives and to evaluate benefits achieved and identify any lessons learned.

■ Spirits: Excise Duties

Kenny MacAskill:

[159036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on public health of freezes on spirits duty over the last seven years.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: In 2016, Public Health England (PHE) published 'The public health burden of alcohol: evidence review' which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-public-health-burden-of-alcohol-evidence-review>

This review looked at the impact of alcohol on the public health and the effectiveness of alcohol control policies, including taxation and price regulation. Several factors can influence alcohol's affordability, such as income, cost-of-living and levels of alcohol duty. When looking at changes in the affordability of alcohol around the time of the duty escalator, the review found that between 2008 and 2012, the affordability of alcohol decreased substantially more than household incomes. This suggests that of all the economic factors that can influence alcohol consumption, the 2% duty escalator could have had a bigger effect than other factors. PHE continues to keep the evidence under review.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Stuart C McDonald:

[160690]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average duration of the asylum procedure at first instance is in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is unable to report what the average duration of the asylum procedure at the first instance is in the UK as this information is not recorded and held in a reportable format.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration. This data can be found at This data can be found at Asy_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2020/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

Stuart C McDonald:

[160691]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average duration of the Dublin procedure at first instance was, from the making of the application up until the outgoing transfer was effectively implemented, in 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold records relating to the duration of individual Dublin claims in 2020 and are unable to provide an average figure.

Anne McLaughlin:**[160716]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many fresh asylum applications were submitted in 2020 by individuals who had previously been refused asylum in the UK.

Chris Philp:

Home Office records indicate that a total of 7,341 Further Submissions in support of fresh asylum/protection claims were submitted in 2020 by individuals who had previously been refused asylum in the UK.

Where people who have previously been refused asylum in the UK wish to make representations in support of a fresh asylum application these are recorded as Further Submissions.

Anne McLaughlin:**[160717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the five most common nationalities of new asylum applicants making claims to the UK in 2020 were; and how many asylum applications were received by the UK from nationals of each of those five countries.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK by the top 20 nationalities are published in table Asy_01c of the [asylum and resettlement summary tables](#), which include a breakdown for year of application.

The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement

The latest data relate up to year ending December 2020. Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum applications in Asy_D01 of the [detailed asylum and resettlement datasets](#).

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Asylum: Detainees**Anne McLaughlin:****[160715]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people applied for asylum from detention in the UK in 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum claims made at ports of entry or "in country" and the latest figures can be found in table Asy_D01 within the [Asylum and Resettlement](#) datasets published on gov.uk. We do not publish further detail on the

location of where an asylum claim is made as this is not held centrally on Home Office databases and could only be determined at disproportionate cost.

■ Asylum: EU Law

Stuart C McDonald: [\[160688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cessation of international protection (Articles 11 and 17 Directive 2011/95/EU) decisions were made by the UK in 2020 (a) in total, (b) by nationality of applicant and (c) by applicant's protection status.

Kevin Foster:

Information regarding the number of cessation of international protection decisions made by the UK in 2020, and the nationality and protection status of each applicant subject to those decisions, is not held centrally and to obtain it would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[160689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many withdrawal of international protection Article 14 and 19 Directive 2011/95/EU decisions were made by the Government in 2020 (a) in total and (b) by nationality of applicant and (c) by applicant's protection status.

Kevin Foster:

Information regarding the number of withdrawal of international protection decisions made by the UK in 2020, and the nationality and protection status of each applicant subject to those decisions, is not held centrally and to obtain it would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

■ Asylum: Homelessness

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[158173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 151819 on Asylum: Homelessness, how (a) homeless and (b) other asylum-seeking persons are made aware that they can obtain support through contact with her Department.

Chris Philp:

All asylum seekers are advised at the time they register their asylum claims that support is available from the Home Office if they would otherwise be destitute.

Information about applying for support is also published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/how-to-claim>.

■ Asylum: Housing

Tim Farron: [\[157992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what monitoring and evaluation is conducted on the contracts held by companies providing accommodation to asylum seekers.

Tim Farron: [\[157993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what penalties are incurred by asylum seeker accommodation providers in the event that they do not meet the requirements of their contracts.

Chris Philp:

We expect the highest standards from our providers, who are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate. The Home Office have access to providers' systems to monitor compliance.

Throughout the pandemic, the ability to inspect accommodation in the usual way has faced some understandable logistical challenges, however we have robust systems in place to monitor and ensure continued accordance with the high standards of service we and those we accommodate expect.

Asylum seekers can also raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help, which enables attention to be focussed on any areas of concern.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) have a robust performance management system, against which providers are expected to deliver. Where performance falls short of the required standard, failures are recorded and can result in the award of points and, ultimately, service credits being applied. Providers' performance is monitored closely by dedicated staff in each contract area, who are in daily contact with them.

This is supplemented by a formal governance process which includes quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards and monthly Contract Management Groups. Service credits and subsequent improvement plans are discussed and monitored as part of this process.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Stephen Timms: [\[160512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what notification her Department provides to a local authority of the placement of Section 95 asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation in its area; in what circumstances such notification is provided; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office and Property providers have developed close working relationships with the Local Authorities in which asylum seekers are accommodated to support the effective coordination of delivered services, acting in the best interests of the asylum seekers.

The Home Office will consider individual requests for specific accommodation or location on a case by case basis. The provider is instructed by the Home Office to provide accommodation that meets the needs of each individual case subject to the availability of accommodation.

We do not provide Local authorities with details of each individual placement of asylum seekers into their area. However, we do provide statistical data on the number of people living in each local authority area and the number of new arrivals to the Strategic Migration Partners who are expected to share this with Local Authorities. Where there is a safe guarding or urgent care need referrals are made to the local authorities to coordinate appropriate services for the individual.

Furthermore, our providers are instructed to consult Local Authorities when procuring dispersed property. A standard operating process for procurement allows for consultation with LAs and statutory bodies.

We have established the Local Government Chief Executive Group (HOLGCEX) group to bring together senior representatives from Home Office, Local Government Association and local authorities with the aim of working in partnership to improve the asylum dispersal process for the people who use this service and the communities in which they reside.

We are trying to implement national structures across 150 LAs who will have a localised view and their own processes and practice. To allow us to better engage, we fund Strategic Migration Partners within each UK region to enhance engagement.

Jonathan Edwards:**[160617]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of revising the £1.129 million threshold at which police forces can recoup costs for policing centres housing asylum seekers.

Kit Malthouse:

All police forces should have reasonable contingency within their budgets for unplanned or unexpected events, but in some cases we recognise that these events may place force finances under additional pressure, and in those instances the Police and Crime Commissioner may apply for additional funding through the Police Special Grant.

Any force applying for Special Grant funding must meet the criteria set out in the published guidance, including that forces are expected to meet additional costs up to an amount equal to one per cent of their core grant funding.

[Special grant guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/special-grant-guidance)

■ Community Security Trust: Finance

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[160765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will renew her Department's funding of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for the Community Security Trust.

Kevin Foster:

The protection of all our faith communities is a priority for Government, delivered in collaboration with the on-going work of the police. Future funding through the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant and the Places of Worship Security funding scheme are currently under consideration.

■ Crimes of Violence: Crime Prevention

Carla Lockhart:

[\[158237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the devolved Administrations on (a) violence reduction strategies and (b) where she plans to allocate additional funding to help tackle violence in the devolved regions.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to reducing serious violence and putting an end to the tragedies afflicting our communities. It is important that we work across government, statutory, private, and voluntary sectors to deliver change, including with the devolved administrations.

We are, for example, working closely with the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, the Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Scottish Government to deliver the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 surrender and compensation scheme across the United Kingdom. We also work closely with the devolved administrations on other aspects of our firearms controls.

Crime prevention and policing are devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland but we maintain regular dialogue on our shared interests. On Monday 8 February, the Minister for Crime and Policing addressed the 'Four Nations' conference on the subject of public health approaches in policing and serious violence across the UK. This week-long conference was match funded by the Home Office.

Crime prevention and policing are reserved in Wales, however, other areas of focus in reducing and preventing serious violence such as health and education are devolved and we continue to work closely with the Welsh Government on these matters. The Home Office has invested a total of £176.5 million over two years into the 18 police force areas worst affected by serious violence – the Serious Violence Fund (SVF). South Wales is one of these 18 areas. From the SVF, South Wales Police have been allocated £1.98m to Surge their police operational capacity. Additionally, £1.76m of the SVF has been invested into the South Wales PCC to develop their Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which brings together key partners to identify the drivers of serious violence and agree a multi-agency response to them.

On the 8 February 2021 we announced a further £880,000 investment into the South Wales area to further develop their VRU for 2021-2022.

In addition to the Serious Violence Fund, we have invested £200 million in early intervention and prevention support initiatives over 10 years to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). In total, 12 grantees in Wales are in receipt of funding from all grant rounds. The YEF will reform the way this government responds to serious violence by identifying what works in diverting children and young people away from involvement in serious violent crime. That is why this government has awarded an extra £5 million towards the expedited development of a national Centre of Excellence (CofE) to help guide government investment and national policies. The CofE will develop a robust evidence base and share best practice across local and national partners to facilitate learning.

■ **Electric Scooters**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[158867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that bans on the use of e-scooters are strictly enforced by local police forces.

Kit Malthouse:

Legislation was amended in July 2020 to allow for rental e-scooter trials which will run for 12 months. It remains illegal to use privately owned e-scooters. How the police enforce road traffic laws on the use of e-scooters is an operational matter for individual Chief Officers who will decide how to deploy available resources, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

■ **Hassockfield Secure Training Centre**

Tim Farron:

[\[157991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's plans are for a new immigration removal centre for women on the former site of Hassockfield Secure Training Centre, 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.

Members: Correspondence**Gareth Thomas:** [158850]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 21 February 2021 from the hon Member for Harrow West with case reference number GT44980.

Kevin Foster:

A response was sent on 26 February 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [160772]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time is to receive a letter of reply from her Department to an hon. Member on immigration issues.

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>

Migrants: Detainees**Ms Diane Abbott:** [158849]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to create small units for the detention of women within existing immigration removal centres; how many women will be detained in those centres; and for what reason the detention estate for women is being expanded by the creation of a new detention centre in 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 (IRC) for around 80 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.

The immigration detention capacity for women is not being expanded. We plan to supplement the new Hassockfield IRC by continuing to provide some detention capacity for women at Colnbrook, Dungavel and Yarl's Wood IRCs, in order to

provide flexibility in placement and shorter escorting journeys for those in detention, including women.

■ Police: Redbridge

Wes Streeting:

[158131]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) police officers and (b) police staff serve in the London Borough of Redbridge in February 2021 compared to May 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin. However, data are collected at Police Force Area (PFA) level only, and information on officer and staff numbers in specific London Boroughs are not held centrally.

The latest in this statistical series covers the situation in both full time-equivalent (FTE) and headcount terms as at 30 September 2020 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2020>

While the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin remains the key measure of the size of the police workforce, as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office also publishes a quarterly update on the number of officers (headcount terms only) in England and Wales. Data are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics>

■ Protest

Sir Charles Walker:

[160564]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timescale is for bringing forward legislative proposals to introduce new police powers to manage protest; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

Legislation, that will allow police to take a more proactive approach in managing highly disruptive protests, will be brought forward shortly.

■ Sexual Offences

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[155015]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of recording the (a) sex and (b) gender of perpetrators of sex offences; and if she will make a statement.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[155016]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which police forces record the (a) sex and (b) gender of perpetrators of sex offences.

Victoria Atkins:

It is an operational matter for the police to determine what relevant information should be recorded to assist in their investigation of individual crimes.

Home Office statisticians work with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) on the quality of data from the police. The OSR have issued guidance on the collection and reporting of data about sex in official statistics which informs on-going conversations the Department has with policing partners on the issue of data:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/draft-guidance-collecting-and-reporting-data-about-sex-in-official-statistics/>

Information is not held centrally on which police forces record both the sex and gender identity of the perpetrators of sexual offences.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Hilary Benn:

[160534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether an application to the Building Safety Fund that has been rejected can be re-submitted in the event of new information on fire risks.

Christopher Pincher:

An appeal process is open for responsible entities which have applied for the Building Safety Fund if they can demonstrate that the building meets the published definitions of eligibility.

Daisy Cooper:

[160813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February to Question 156575, on Building Safety Fund, whether he plans to re-open registration for the Building Safety Fund for those buildings that received confirmation of dangerous cladding on their external wall after the Fund closed to registrations on 31 July 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

We will publish more details on how the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside the Building Safety Fund as soon as possible.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[158845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has undertaken of non-cladding related building safety risks, including combustible insulation and wooden timber balconies; and what steps his Department is taking to mitigate these risks.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government published in January 2020 a consolidated advice note providing advice to building owners. The consolidated advice note provided information to building owners on the actions they should be taking immediately to address the risk of fire spread from external wall systems including insulation and balconies.

We have invested over £5 billion investment in building safety, including £3.5 billion announced on the 10 February. This will fund the cost of replaying unsafe cladding in all buildings 18 metres and over.

We will also provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18 metres with access to finance for cladding remediation costs and a commitment that their monthly cladding repayment costs will not exceed £50 a month.

We will publish more details on how these schemes will work in due course.

■ Buildings: Safety

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[160571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using the proposed Building Safety Bill to Amend Section 1 of the Building Act for the power to make regulations to facilitate the protection of property in a proportionate manner.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Act 1984 already enables building regulations to be made on matters such as sustainable development and the security of buildings, as well as the health and safety of persons using buildings, and measures to meet these objectives can also have benefits for property protection. The Government has no plans to extend the scope of building regulations at present specifically to address property protection, but will keep this matter under review. In particular, Government will be undertaking research into how fire safety legislation in other countries addresses property protection issues.

■ Housing: Construction

Tim Farron:

[\[157995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of using ONS 2014-based Household Projections data to calculate standard method housing targets, rather than 2018-based Household Projections.

Christopher Pincher:

Following consultation last year on the standard method for assessing local housing need, and after a year of uncertainty due to COVID-19, it became apparent that it was particularly important to provide stability and certainty for plan-making and decision-making. This is so that local areas can get on and plan based on a method and level of ambition that they are familiar with. The Government therefore carefully considered whether to use the 2018-based household projections and concluded that, in the interests of stability for local planning and for local communities, it will continue to expect only the use of the 2014-based household projections. This gives local areas the best possible chance of meeting the deadline of December 2023, the date by which all authorities are expected to have up-to-date plans.

Housing: Fire Prevention**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[158844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on the research being undertaken by the Building Research Establishment into trigger heights and thresholds.

Christopher Pincher:

The project on trigger thresholds was commissioned in September 2020 and the research remains on going. The research is currently scheduled to conclude at the end of 2021.

Housing: Insulation**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[160570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153161 on Housing: Insulation, what estimate his Department has made of the number of leaseholders likely to (a) lose their home and (b) declare bankruptcy as a result of the costs of resolving fire safety issues relating to (i) cladding removal, (ii) balcony remediation, (iii) replacing combustible insulation, (iv) replacing missing fire breaks, (v) increased insurance premiums and (vi) waking watches.

Christopher Pincher:

The information requested is not held.

The Government has announced over £5 billion in grant towards 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.

These schemes will also ultimately help to end interim measures and reduce building insurance costs. They build on steps already taken to support leaseholders, including the £30 million waking watch fund to incentivise the purchase of alarm systems in buildings where there is currently a waking watch in place and there is no common alarm system.

■ Housing: Older People

Felicity Buchan:

[\[158230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating funding to specialist retirement housing to tackle the housing shortage; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The growth of this sector is important for meeting the needs of the ageing 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 over the course of the programme will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including retirement housing.

We are continuing to work closely with the sector to look at how we can further support its growth.

■ Housing: Redbridge

Wes Streeting:

[\[158136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what funding he has allocated to support the construction of new homes in the London Borough of Redbridge in each year since 2010.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has agreed a major package of funding for London through the Affordable Homes Programme with the Greater London Authority. Programme spend is not ringfenced by local borough.

London will receive £4.8 billion through the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016-23, to deliver at least 116,000 affordable housing starts by March 2023.

In addition, the GLA will receive £4 billion under the new Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 to deliver a further 35,000 new affordable housing starts by March 2026.

Between 2010 and 2020, we have delivered over 508,000 new affordable homes, of which over 360,000 were for rent – London accounted for over one fifth of overall delivery in this period (108,000), with 74,000 for rent.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[160743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to fully compensate local authorities for costs incurred and revenue lost as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

The Government has allocated over £8 billion directly to councils since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chancellor also announced at the 2020 Spending Review that local authorities will receive over £3 billion of additional support in 2021-22. The latest data from our monthly financial monitoring exercise suggests that estimated additional expenditure over the course of the current financial year 2020-21 is £7.3 billion

As part of our support package, councils have access to a compensation scheme for lost income from sales, fees and charges, which has been extended to June 2021, through which the Government will support local councils with 75% of losses beyond the first 5%.

We will continue to closely monitor the situation and work with local government to ensure they are managing as the pandemic progresses and we have a collective understanding of the costs they are facing.

■ Neighbourhood Development Plans

Daisy Cooper: [\[158221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Planning for the Future White Paper, updated on 4 February 2021, whether neighbourhood plans will still be able to allocate sites (a) housing and (b) other development to shape development and growth in the local area.

Daisy Cooper: [\[158222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the White Paper, Planning for the Future, whether he plans to enable neighbourhood plans to continue to include development management policies.

Christopher Pincher:

The Planning for the Future White Paper made clear that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system, but we will want to consider whether their content should become more focused to reflect our proposals for Local Plans. We intend to publish further details as soon as possible.

■ Park Homes: Fees and Charges

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[160516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has plans to bring forward legislative proposals in the next session of Parliament to change the inflationary index for park home pitch fees from RPI to CPI.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to improving protections for park home residents.

We will introduce primary legislation to change the pitch fee review inflationary index from the Retail Prices Index (RPI) to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), when the parliamentary timetable allows.

■ Property Searches

Andrew Rosindell: [\[157967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support is available to local authorities to manage the increase in demand for local authority searches.

Christopher Pincher:

We have continued to support councils throughout the pandemic, demonstrated by the fact we have provided over £4.6 billion in un-ringfenced funding to councils across four tranches throughout the financial year. This unprecedented level of un-ringfenced funding is in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area

■ Society of Antiquaries

Zarah Sultana: [\[160824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to help the Society of Antiquaries remain at New Burlington House.

Eddie Hughes:

The current rent agreement with the Society of Antiquaries was put in place following a legal decision by the High Court in 2005 and subsequent arbitration in 2015. The Societies accepted the new rent agreement which allowed them to occupy New Burlington House on a significantly discounted basis.

We are continuing to explore solutions with all the Learned Societies based at New Burlington House that can deliver public value while enabling them to remain in situ.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Agriculture and Fisheries: Subsidies**

Gareth Thomas: [\[154686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her policy position is on current discussions at the World Trade Organisation on reducing fishing and agriculture subsidies; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom is engaged in multilateral negotiations on agriculture through the WTO's Committee on Agriculture Special Session. The UK is committed to a meaningful outcome on domestic support consistent with the development of the UK's independent agricultural policies.

At the WTO Informal Ministerial Gathering on the 29th January 2021, my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade made a clear statement that the UK believes it is imperative that the WTO delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14.6 mandate, that will help protect the world's fish stocks and end harmful fisheries subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overcapacity, and overfishing.

■ Business: Nigeria

Kate Osamor: [\[158994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policy of her Department's updated guidance to UK firms operating in Nigeria that Nigeria has a democratic framework which guarantees human rights within its constitution. an independent judiciary and a strong civil society.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Our guidance forms part of the package of support that we offer to all British businesses. HM Government is clear that more trade does not have to come at the expense of our values.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Mr Jonathan Lord: [\[158039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent progress she has made for the UK to accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Greg Hands:

On Monday 1st February, the Government submitted its notification of intent to begin the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) accession process. This is the first step towards accession before formal negotiations start later in the year.

We will publish our negotiation objectives, scoping analysis, and consultation response in advance of the start of formal negotiations, expected in Spring 2021.

■ Fossil Fuels: Overseas Trade

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[157243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government plans to use public money to fund new overseas fossil fuel projects ahead of COP26.

Graham Stuart:

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. Following the conclusion of the public consultation, which closed to submissions on 8 February, the date of implementation of the new policy will be confirmed shortly.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Attendance

Peter Kyle: [\[160740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Failure to Appear warrants were issued by courts for (a) murder and (b) rape in each of the last five years up to March 2020.

Chris Philp:

Data showing the number of failure to appear warrants issued for (a) murder and (b) rape from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2020 in both Crown and Magistrates' Courts can be found in the table below:

YEAR	CROWN		MAGISTRATES	
	MURDER	RAPE	MURDER	RAPE
2015/16	27	71	18	143
2016/17	29	76	26	227
2017/18	13	65	10	146
2018/19	29	28	23	146
2019/20	29	33	21	161
5 YR TOTAL	127	273	98	823

Notes: 1. Data are taken from a live management information system and can change over time

2. The data is based on statistics from management information system extract only
3. Data are management information and may differ from previously published stats and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics
4. Magistrates where a defendant is charged with an indictable offence and if more than one offence and a Failure to Appear Warrant is issued each offence is counted separately
5. Crown if a defendant has had a bench warrant issued on more than one occasion, they have been counted separately
6. Offences include attempted and conspiracy sub-groups
7. Data has not been cross referenced with case files.

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[\[160647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what methodology his Department uses to decide the (a) location of Nightingale courts and (b) type of cases each of those courts will hear.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[160648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the geographic distribution of Nightingale courts.

Chris Philp:

Nightingale courts provide much needed additional capacity to hear face-to-face hearings in a Covid-safe environment, as part of a wider package of recovery measures that form our overall response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

When considering Nightingale courts, we assess where the need is greatest taking into account jurisdictional caseload, existing capacity and additional capacity measures such as plexiglass installations and modular temporary buildings; and then look for suitable venues in that location that can satisfy a number of specific requirements. These include accessibility, safety and security, length of hire, cost of provision and whether building works are required. Each venue is assessed for value for money before final decisions are made.

Nightingale courts have opened in every HMCTS region, hearing case types according to operational need, including Crown and Magistrates non-custodial cases as well as Civil and Family work. These venues help to free up more room in existing courts to hear other cases, such as custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

We are opening more Nightingale courtrooms and are on track to provide a total of 60 courtrooms across the estate by the end of March. We will continue to keep our recovery plans under close review to ensure that the geographic distribution of Nightingale courts meets our operational requirements.

■ Prisoners on Remand: Remote Hearings**Alex Cunningham:**[\[160645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February to Question 147845 on Remote Hearings, whether any funding has been provided to police forces to assist in the running of video remand hearings since March 2020.

Chris Philp:

Following my Answer of 8 February to Question 147845 on Remote hearings, I can confirm that temporary funding has been provided by MoJ and the Home Office to police forces to assist in the running of remote remand hearings. HMCTS and the Home Office have agreed a joint funding approach to provide 50% of the funding for Video Remand Hearings (VRH). Funding has been provided to 6 police forces in priority areas (Derbyshire, Devon and Cornwall, Durham, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk) to enable them to operate VRH in the 5 weeks to the end of the financial year 20/21.

Alex Cunningham:[\[160646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February to Question 147843 on Prisoners on Remand: Remote Hearings, what the total costs incurred are by (a) video remand courts and (b) Prisoner Escorting and Court Services court transport and custody since March 2020.

Chris Philp:

We do not hold information centrally on the costs to policing from running Video Remand Hearing (VRH) since March 2020. In many cases VRH will have been conducted through the redeployment of police officers from other duties, rather than through a direct funding allocation.

Regarding the cost of Prisoner Escorting and Court Services (PECS) court transport and custody, the period in question straddles two contract periods as the PECS contract changed on 29/08/2020 and defining a specific cost for this period is not readily available.

The total value of the PECS GEN4 10-year contract is £1.377 billion, which commenced on 29/08/2020. The two contracts which comprise the PECS GEN4 10-year contract are available in the public domain.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Carla Lockhart:**[\[912617\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Northern Ireland Assembly voting system on implementation of (a) the principle cross-community consent and (b) the Belfast Agreement and the political process in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 3 March 2021]: The voting systems within the devolved administrations are devolved matters.

The principle of cross-community consent applies to matters for which the Northern Ireland Assembly is responsible. This approach to voting on Assembly business is entirely compatible with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and we remain fully committed to that Agreement.

PRIME MINISTER**■ Members: Correspondence****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[160582\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to his oral contribution on 24 February 2021, Official Report, col 911, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North dated 25 February 2021 on changes in the level of funding for Transport for the North.

Dame Diana Johnson:[\[160583\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to his oral contribution on 24 February 2021, Official Report, col 911, if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of his policies and the funding letter from the Department for Transport, sent to Transport for the North, dated 4 January 2021.

Boris Johnson:

A reply will be sent in due course. Transport for the North's overall funding means they will have access to over £70 million this coming financial year alone. We are building on the £29 billion we have invested in transport in the north since 2010 with: the Integrated Rail Plan bringing together HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, and our multi-billion-pound rail investment programme; our £5 billion investment into local bus and cycle links, including in the North; our £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund which will benefit communities across the region; and our £4.2 billion intra-city transport fund, benefitting bus, train, and tram services across our 8 largest city regions. And at Budget, we reaffirmed our commitment to northern infrastructure, with:

- The launch of the UK Infrastructure Bank, headquartered in Leeds;
- A new government economic campus in Darlington;
- Investment in offshore wind port infrastructure in Teesside and Humberside;
- And over £450 million in Towns Fund Deals for towns across the north – investing in infrastructure and culture from Middlesbrough to Bolton, to Rochdale and Scunthorpe.

TRANSPORT**■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[160561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on meeting the target of 4,000 new zero emission buses during the current Parliament; and when the first order for those buses will be placed.

Rachel Maclean:

As set out in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Spending Review 2020 the Government will invest £120m in 2021-22 to start the delivery of the 4,000 zero emission buses announced by the Prime Minister last year.

Together with existing funding for the All-Electric Bus Town or City, Government funding in the first year of the programme could support the purchase of 800 zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

Further details will be announced in the spring on how the £120m funding will be distributed.

■ Euston Station: High Speed 2 Railway Line

Gavin Newlands: [\[158968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost of the purchase of land and property in respect of the development of London Euston station has been to date in connection with High Speed Two, Phase 1.

Andrew Stephenson:

£946,379,547.59 (including VAT where relevant) for compulsory purchase and £19,498,000 for statutory blight and discretionary schemes.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Gavin Newlands: [\[158965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153281, on High Speed 2 Railway Line, what the most costly (a) land and (b) property acquisition in Phase 1 of HS2 was, by cost.

Andrew Stephenson:

The most costly land and property acquisition was the three buildings outside Euston station, being One Euston Square, One Eversholt Street -The Podium and One Eversholt Street - The Tower.

Gavin Newlands: [\[158967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total costs incurred by High Speed Two of procuring professional advice for the estimates of costs to acquire property in connection with HS2 Phase 1 since 2009; if he will publish a list of the companies involved in that work.

Andrew Stephenson:

Phase One Acquisition spend from Financial Year 2014/15 to 2020/21 is £41.5m; no earlier spend reported. Companies involved are: CBRE, Lambert Smith Hampton, Carter Jonas, Valuation Office Agency, Montagu Evans and Deloitte. These companies also rely on sub-contractors for various technical matters.

Gavin Newlands:[\[158970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many land and property transactions have been conducted as part of phase 1 of High Speed 2; and how many of those transactions are subject to Non-Disclosure Agreements on behalf of either party to the transaction.

Andrew Stephenson:

In Phase One there have been 1,491 compensation payments made. Please note that an acquisitions case typically can have multiple payments associated with it.

HS2 Ltd does not as a matter of course ask for NDAs as default for its land and property acquisitions. For the programme as a whole, HS2 Ltd has over 400 specific confidentiality agreements but does not record/label the agreements as to whether they relate to land and property transactions or not.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Compulsory Purchase**Gavin Newlands:**[\[158966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many court actions there have been in respect of Compulsory Purchase Orders against High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd in relation to Phase 1 of HS2; and what expenditure High Speed 2 (HS2) Ltd has incurred in (a) solicitors and (b) other legal costs in connection with those court actions.

Andrew Stephenson:

There has been one determined High Court and Court of Appeal case arising out of a compulsory purchase notice served by HS2 Ltd. on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport for Phase One of the HS2 Project. The court ruled in the Secretary of State's favour.

There have been ten cases in which a reference has been made to the Upper Tribunal in respect of compensation entitlement as a result of compulsory purchase notices served by HS2 Ltd for Phase One of HS2.

There has been one case where HS2 Ltd. made a reference to the Upper Tribunal in respect of disputed compensation. All compensation cases have settled save for two, which are still ongoing.

There have been twelve Upper Tribunal references made by HS2 Ltd as a result of material detriment counter notices served on HS2 Ltd. requesting the Secretary of State acquires more land than the land referred to in the compulsory purchase notice. Only one has been heard in the Tribunal, with the rest all settling.

There have been seven Upper Tribunal references made in respect of blight notices rejected by the Secretary of State. Two of the references reached a full hearing in the Upper Tribunal (the other references being withdrawn).

Certificates of Appropriate Alternative Developments, Section 18 valuations and connected court cases have not been included in the above.

The information provided in this response has been identified from the information that is currently available to the Department.

Legal costs:

12 x Counter Notice References (a) £236,842 and (b) £51,754 (disbursements including Counsel fees)

10 x Compensation References (a) £1,258,393 and (b) £756,968 (disbursements including Counsel fees)

2 x blight notices (a) £4,795 .

■ Ports: Fees and Charges

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[158979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to increase the competitiveness of ports to support operators that are facing high charges.

Robert Courts:

The UK has a very competitive, privately operated ports sector. The Government is committed to supporting this competitiveness and has an ongoing dialogue with port operators to ensure their interests are fully taken into account.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[158980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to regulate port charges.

Robert Courts:

The Government has no current plans to make changes to the regulation of charges imposed on port operators. Following the UK's departure from the European Union, a review of whether the Port Services Regulations 2019 are required will be initiated as part of broader EU regulatory reviews.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[158981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the charges imposed on port operators in the UK.

Robert Courts:

The Government has no current plans to make changes to the regulation of charges imposed on port operators and will continue to utilise the mechanisms that exist in the Harbours Act 1964 for managing objections over Harbour Dues. Following the UK's departure from the European Union, a review of whether the Port Services Regulations 2019 are required will be initiated as part of broader EU regulatory reviews.

■ Railway Stations: Pedestrian Areas**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[159359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Rail Accident Investigation Branch's report into a fatality at Eden Park station in 2020, what funding he plans to provide to accelerate the installation of tactile paving at mainline rail stations.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[159360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the findings of the Rail Accident Investigation Board's Report 01/2021 Eden Park published on 19 February 2021 on additional risks posed to blind and partially sighted people, what steps he is taking in response to the finding that half of mainline railway stations do not have tactile paving.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

This was a tragic incident and we fully accept the recommendations in the report. Whenever industry installs, replaces or renews platform infrastructure they are required to install tactiles. I have asked Network Rail to work up a costed plan for a wider roll out of tactiles for stations where tactiles are not being delivered as part of an existing enhancements or renewal project.

■ Transport for the North: Finance**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[160579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of funding for Transport for the North.

Andrew Stephenson:

In the next financial year, TfN will have access to over £70m of funding, the majority of which will enable further development of Northern Powerhouse Rail. To date, over £100m has been spent on Northern Powerhouse Rail development. TfN's most recent core funding settlement is an appropriate settlement that enables the organisation to continue to deliver its statutory functions of developing a transport strategy for the region. The Rail North Partnership Grant that TfN receives from the Department will also continue unchanged in the next financial year. TfN was allocated up to £150m at the 2015 Spending Review to support its Integrated and Smart Travel programme, with this multi-year funding allocation expiring at the end of the current financial year. TfN utilised around £24m in the past five years to enable the roll-out of smart ticketing across the North and we are now considering how best to deliver more effectively the rollout of smart ticketing to improve passenger services across the region.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[160580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding his Department has provided to Transport for the North in each of the last three years.

Andrew Stephenson:

TfN have received £10m in core funding for the previous two financial years. In December 2020, TfN's core budget for this financial year (20/21) was reduced to £7

million, in part due to TfN's underspend this financial year and the maintenance of large reserves.

TfN have had access to £104 million of the £147m Northern Powerhouse Rail budget since FY18/19, broken down as follows: 2018/19 - £15 million; 2019/20 - £30 million; 2020/21 - £59 million.

TfN was allocated up to £150m at the 2015 Spending Review to support its Integrated and Smart Travel programme, with this multi-year funding allocation expiring at the end of the current financial year. TfN utilised around £24 million in the past five years to enable the roll-out of smart ticketing across the North.

Finally, TfN receive a grant from the Department for Transport as a contribution to funding the Rail North Partnership team which manages the Northern and TransPennine Express franchises on behalf of the Department for Transport and Transport for the North. For the last three years these amounts are 2018/19 - £388k, 2019/20 - £582k, 2020/21 - £680k.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[160581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent representations he has received on changes in the level of funding for Transport for the North.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Secretary of State has received correspondence on Transport for the North's (TfN) recent funding settlement from a range of individuals and organisations. Aside from representations made by TfN Board members themselves, this correspondence includes from MPs, councillors, Combined Authority Mayors and the TUC. This is in addition to ongoing dialogue between TfN and Departmental officials.

■ Water Sports: Regulation

Claire Hanna:

[\[160852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's timeframe is for bringing forward legislative proposals on the safe use and conduct of personal water crafts.

Robert Courts:

We are continuing to develop the legislation necessary to bring personal watercraft within the safe use and conduct provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. A public consultation seeking comments on the draft legislation will be published once this process has been completed.

Local and harbour authorities already have significant powers to introduce measures deal with any issues in the waters they manage through byelaws and harbour directions.

TREASURY**■ Blackmore Bond: Insolvency**

Peter Grant: [\[160731\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of protection for investors since the collapse of Blackmore Bond plc.

Peter Grant: [\[160732\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government plans to take in response to the statutory report submitted by the Joint Administrators of Blackmore Bond plc.

Peter Grant: [\[160734\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Financial Conduct Authority's response to concerns raised in 2017 on the sales practices being used by Blackmore Bond plc and its representatives.

John Glen:

The Government is aware of the failure of Blackmore Bond plc and the latest report submitted by the Joint Administrators in December. Blackmore Bond plc issued non-transferable debt securities (sometimes known as mini-bonds). It is not a regulated activity for firms to issue their own non-transferable debt securities. However, in the UK, responsibility for regulating the promotion and marketing of mini-bonds lies with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

On 1 January 2021 the FCA made permanent rules banning the promotion of high risk 'speculative illiquid securities' (including some mini-bonds) to ordinary retail consumers. These rules were introduced in response to the failure of London Capital & Finance and concerns about the suitability of speculative illiquid securities for retail investors. This ban prevents future companies like Blackmore Bond plc marketing their products to retail investors. The Treasury is currently undertaking a review into the regulatory framework for mini-bonds and will launch a consultation later this year on the regulation of non-transferable debt securities.

In view of the FCA's role as an independent non-governmental body it would not be appropriate for Government to comment on the FCA's handling of Blackmore Bond plc. Investors who have concerns about the FCA's handling of the failure of Blackmore Bond plc can make a complaint using the FCA Complaints Scheme.

■ Cash Dispensing

Ruth Jones: [\[158201\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with bank chief executives on the maintenance of the UK cash network; and if he will make a statement.

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-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

The Government has stated its commitment to protecting access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. To progress this work, the Government published a Call for Evidence on Access to Cash in October 2020. The Call for Evidence sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government is considering responses to the Call for Evidence and will set out next steps in due course.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Treasury has been working closely with regulators and industry to ensure customers continue to have access to essential banking services, while also protecting the safety of staff and customers. This has meant the vast majority of people have been able to access cash through the pandemic.

Patricia Gibson: [\[160712\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on protecting access to cash; if he will publish the Government's timeframe for bringing forward those proposals; and what plans the Government has to ensure that cash remains a viable payment method for people who are reliant on it.

Patricia Gibson: [\[160713\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Which?'s recent research showing a nationwide reduction in free-to-use cashpoints; and if he will publish the Government's timeframe for bringing forward legislative proposals to protect access to cash.

Patricia Gibson: [\[160714\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that people can continue to access cash; and if he will publish the Government's timeframe for bringing forward legislative proposals to protect access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. To progress this work, the Government published a Call for Evidence on Access to Cash in October 2020. The Call for Evidence sought views on the key considerations associated with

cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government is considering responses to the Call for Evidence and will set out next steps in due course.

The Government created the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group in 2019, which has provided a forum for the public bodies to formally co-ordinate respective approaches to access to cash. This is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payment Systems Regulator and Financial Conduct Authority. The members published an update on the actions of its members in July 2020. This included work led by the PSR and FCA to develop a comprehensive picture of cash access infrastructure across the UK.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Treasury has been working closely with regulators and industry to ensure customers continue to have access to essential banking services, including cash, while also protecting the safety of staff and customers. This has meant the vast majority of people have been able to access cash through the pandemic.

With regards to ATMs, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has existing arrangements in place to protect free-to-use ATMs that do not have another free-to-use ATM or Post Office within one kilometre. LINK's members have also made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash. The Payment Systems Regulator has powers to regulate LINK and is holding it to account over its commitment to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs.

Ronnie Cowan:

[160730]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that people can continue to access cash; and if he will publish the Government's timeframe for bringing forward legislative proposals to protect access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. To progress this work, the Government published a Call for Evidence on Access to Cash in October 2020. The Call for Evidence sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government is considering responses to the Call for Evidence and will set out next steps in due course.

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approaches to access to cash. This is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payment Systems Regulator and Financial Conduct Authority. The members published an update on the actions of its members in July 2020. This included work led by the PSR and FCA to develop a comprehensive picture of cash access infrastructure across the UK.

■ Child Benefit

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[160681]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the expected (a) turnaround time and (b) service level is for recipients of child benefit who are pursuing outstanding claims and queries; and whether those (i) turnaround times and (ii) service levels have been met over the last two years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC aim to process new claims and changes of circumstances from UK Child Benefit and tax credit customers in 22 days. For international customers HMRC aim to process new claims and changes of circumstances in 92 days. For other priority post items HMRC aim to deal with those queries in 15 days. Those targets have been met in each of the last two years.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Helen Hayes:

[160742]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the adequacy of funding to local authorities to support public engagement activities aimed at encouraging covid-19 vaccine uptake locally.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regularly discuss local government funding. The specific issue of encouraging vaccine uptake is a public health matter and thus the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Significant additional funding has been made available for local public health responses to Covid-19. Chief among these is the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, which will provide over £2 billion across local authorities in England across the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 for a range of public health initiatives, including communications.

In addition, over £23 million in funding has been allocated through the Community Champions scheme to 60 councils and to voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from Covid-19 and boost vaccine take up.

The Government's plan to maximise Covid-19 vaccine uptake is available at the following webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-uptake-plan/uk-covid-19-vaccine-uptake-plan>.

Members: Correspondence**Hilary Benn:**[\[160533\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Leeds Central on complaint appeal 4720546844/244/CAD relating to the Valuation Office Agency.

Jesse Norman:

The correspondence regarding appeal case 4720546844/244/CAD was transferred to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) for reply on 15 January 2021. The VOA responded directly to the Honourable Member on 3 February, and a copy of the VOA's response was resent on 2 March.

Money Service Businesses: Non-domestic Rates**Nickie Aiken:**[\[160809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether inbound tourist currency exchange shops serving inbound tourists are distinct from bureau de change shops serving local immigrants transferring currency out of the country, in respect of eligibility for covid-19 Business Rates Relief.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has published guidance on eligibility for the business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

It is for Local Authorities to implement any reliefs and make decisions on eligibility in line with that guidance.

Public Sector: Pay**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[159373\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to lift the public sector pay freeze.

Steve Barclay:

In order to protect jobs and ensure fairness, we confirmed at the Spending Review (2020) that there will be a temporary pause to headline pay rises for the majority of public sector workforces in 2021-22.

It is right to temporarily pause pay awards for public sector workers earning £24,000 and above on a full-time equivalent basis, while we assess the impact Coronavirus has on the wider economy and labour market.

For all workforces where such arrangements exist, performance pay, overtime, pay progression and pay rises from promotion will continue. This means that the majority of public sector workers will see an increase in their pay in 2021/22.

Given the unique impact of Covid-19 on the health service, and despite the challenging economic context, the government will continue to provide for pay rises for over 1 million NHS workers.

The Government will also prioritise the lowest paid, with 2.1 million public sector workers earning less than £24,000 receiving a minimum £250 increase.

The Government will reassess public sector pay policy ahead of the 2022/23 Annual Pay Round when the impact of Covid-19 on the wider labour market will be clearer.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

Zarah Sultana:

[\[160825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a tapering-off period for the Stamp Duty Land Tax holiday beyond 31 March 2021, for people who have begun the buying process beforehand, but not completed it.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary increase in the SDLT nil rate band will be extended to continue to support the housing market, while ensuring that purchases that are unable to be completed before 31 March because of delays in the sector are still able to receive the relief.

The nil rate band will continue to be set at £500,000 until 30 June 2021. In order to ease the housing market back to the standard rates, from 1 July 2021, the nil rate band will step down to £250,000 before returning to the standard rate of £125,000 from 1 October 2021.

■ West Midlands Combined Authority: Railway Stations

Steve McCabe:

[\[160523\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has recently received from the West Midlands Combined Authority on the funding of three new train stations to serve the Camp Hill Line in Birmingham; and when the West Midlands Combined Authority is planned to receive the full funding to implement plans for the Camp Hill Line.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to improving local connectivity and supporting economic growth in the West Midlands. Yesterday's Budget confirmed £59m of funding towards five new rail stations in the region, of which three will serve the Camp Hill Line.

WALES

■ Drugs: Companies

Ben Lake:

[\[160769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, with reference to his correspondence of 19 February 2021 to the chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee, what (a) discussions and (b) support his Department provided the pharmaceutical company in question; and when engagement with that company began.

Simon Hart:

Officials in my Office had several discussions with the company, including in regard to difficulties the company was experiencing in exporting medicines to the EU after the Transition Period ended. Officials from several government departments offered the company advice, guidance and expertise to help resolve these difficulties.

My officials first contacted the company directly on 12 January. Discussions had taken place earlier via business representative organisations.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Children: Day Care****Layla Moran:**[\[160780\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding tailored financial support for the wraparound holiday childcare sector to ensure women have adequate childcare support.

Kemi Badenoch:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQs [147072](#) and [148867](#) answered on 22 February 2021.

■ Government Departments: Equality**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[157266\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to (a) co-ordinate equalities strategies across government and (b) monitor departmental performance against those strategies.

Kemi Badenoch:

All departments ensure that equality considerations are at the heart of their decision-making; this is key to the Government's commitment to delivering equality of opportunity for all as well as complying with legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty. My officials in the Equality Hub provide advice to departments to assist with this.

We also work with other departments to ensure they publish substantive equality objectives, as part of their departmental plans, that relate to their policy and service delivery responsibilities. Publishing equality objectives as part of core departmental planning processes means that performance against these objectives is measured and that we are advancing equality across Government.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Bank Services: Pensions and Social Security Benefits****Andrew Gwynne:****[160568]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps the Government has taken to publicise the Payment Exception Service to people who are eligible to use it.

Guy Opperman:

The Payment Exception Service is available in limited circumstances when customers are unable to provide us with bank account, building society, credit union, internet based or basic bank account details. Information about this service is publicised on <https://www.gov.uk/payment-exception-service>.

■ Bereavement Support Payment: Cohabitation**Liz Saville Roberts:****[160758]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to expand the eligibility criteria for the Bereavement Support Payment to include unmarried couples; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

We intend to take forward a Remedial Order to remove the incompatibilities from the legislation governing Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment by extending these benefits to cohabitants with children. The Order will be laid before the House in due course.

■ Children: Maintenance**Navendu Mishra:****[160840]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to (a) improve the compliance rate of child maintenance payments and (b) ensure receiving parents do not fall into poverty due to missed or uncollected child maintenance payments.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service remains committed to ensuring that receiving parents get the money they are owed in maintenance payments, and this has been the case throughout the pandemic. The most recent quarterly statistics show that, in the quarter ending September 2020, 72 per cent of all paying parents paid some of their child maintenance through the Collect & Pay service.

Where compliance is not achieved we may deduct maintenance (and/or any arrears) direct from a paying parent's. This is one of the Service's most effective enforcement powers accounting for over half of the maintenance collected under Collect and Pay.

The Service also has tough enforcement powers including deducting as a regular or lump sum deduction from bank accounts, whether they are solely or jointly held as part of a business. Alongside these powers are a range of civil enforcement actions

that can be taken through the courts once a liability order has been obtained. These actions include referral to an enforcement agency, committal to prison, and/or disqualification of holding or obtaining a passport or driving licence.

Child maintenance is not taken into account if a parent is also receiving income-related benefits, so can make a real difference to receiving parents and their children. We estimate that there are 120,000 fewer children in low-income households (measured on absolute low income after housing costs) as a result of child maintenance payments.

■ **Conditions of Employment: Disability**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[158960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the proportion of employers that (a) have a disability leave policy and (b) allow homeworking as a reasonable adjustment.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP does not collate information about which employers have a disability leave policy and does not collate information on employers that allow homeworking as a reasonable adjustment. Through the Voluntary Reporting Framework, we are encouraging employers to become more transparent and to have open conversations about disability and health at work. The Access to Work scheme supports employers to provide workplace adjustments.

■ **Coronavirus**

Andy McDonald:

[\[160677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answers of 26 February 2021 to Questions 155053 and Question 155054, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on (a) the prevalence of long covid and (b) progress of research into whether covid symptoms are permanent or temporary.

Justin Tomlinson:

On 18 February 2021, the Government announced that the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research Innovation (UKRI) had been awarded £18.5 million in funding for four research projects to help understand and address the longer-term health effects of COVID-19 in non-hospitalised patients.

As research into the long-term health symptoms and impacts of COVID-19 is ongoing, we are collaborating across Government to monitor emerging evidence and consider our response.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Liam Byrne:

[\[153131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes her Department has introduced to provide support to individuals and organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and what funding has been allocated to each of those programmes in the 2020-21 financial year.

Mims Davies:

Throughout this pandemic, this Government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses and, for those in most need, injected billions into the welfare system.

As of 5 January, England entered nationwide restrictions to manage a new variant of Coronavirus. With these restrictions, businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure facing forced closure in England are eligible for a one-off grant worth up to £9,000 to help them through to spring. This is on top of the existing Local Restriction Support Grant (Closed) which will continue to offer businesses support of up to £3,000 for each month they're closed.

Local authorities are being provided with a top up to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) worth £500 million, bringing the total value of ARG to over £1.6 billion. This grant ensures local authorities can support, on a discretionary basis, businesses not eligible for other grants but still affected by restrictions. Business grant policy remains a fully devolved area, with the Devolved Administrations receiving their share of this funding through the Barnett formula in the usual way.

Businesses across the UK can continue to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which as of mid-December had supported 9.9 million jobs at the cost of over £45 billion, and its extension until the end of April 2021 will give many businesses and workers much-needed security. The Government has also extended the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until the end of April 2021, with a boosted package of support providing the self-employed with grants covering 80% of average trading profits. So far SEISS has seen 2.7 million self-employed workers make claims under the scheme totalling £13.7 billion.

Businesses needing access to liquidity can also apply for guaranteed loans through various loan schemes, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, until the end of March 2021. Over 1.4 million small and medium sized companies have received government-backed loans, worth over £68 billion.

This support comes on top of billions of pounds' worth of business rates reliefs, tax deferrals, and other labour market schemes.

To support those on low incomes through the outbreak, DWP introduced a package of temporary welfare measures. Taken together, these measures provide over £7bn of additional support through the welfare system for people affected by COVID-19. These include the £20 Universal Credit uplift, increasing the Local Housing Allowance

rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants, and suspending the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed UC claimants.

DWP also introduced a number of programmes and policy changes to offer support to individuals and organisations. Funding was received to support Covid-19 measures of £1.2bn which include £870 million for Restarting the Job Market and £170m for the Winter Support Grant Scheme).

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Sick Leave

Justin Madders: [\[158090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of employees from the DWP Debt Management team are on sick leave as at 24 February 2021.

Guy Opperman:

As at 24 February 2021, 3.2 per cent of Debt Management staff were recorded as being on sickness absence, this rises to 3.7 per cent when sickness absence due to COVID, which is recorded separately as Special Leave with Pay, is included.

■ Disability: Pay

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[158959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department has had with relevant stakeholders on implementing mandatory reporting and action plans on the disability pay gap.

Justin Tomlinson:

Government has worked with a large number of employers and expert partners to develop a Voluntary Reporting Framework (VRF) to support organisations to record and voluntarily report information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. The aim of the VRF is to encourage employers to be more transparent and to start having open conversations about disability and health at work. There is no mandatory requirement for companies to notify Government if they have signed up to the framework and are publishing this data.

■ Disability: Public Consultation

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[158958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the timescale is for the consultation on the National Strategy for Disabled People; and when that process will include consultation with (a) disabled people's organizations and representatives of disabled workers and (b) trade unions.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to transforming the lives of disabled people, and will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year.

It will be informed by insights from the lived experience of disabled people, and will focus on the issues that disabled people say are most important across all aspects of

life, from transport to education, and housing to employment. On Friday 15th January, we launched the online UK Disability Survey, which complements the range of engagement already undertaken and ongoing, including lived experience research with disabled people, discussions with the Disabled Charities Consortium, the Regional Stakeholder Networks and others. Contributions to the survey will feed not only into the development of the strategy but also its delivery.

■ Discretionary Housing Payments

Navendu Mishra: [\[160848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been received for Discretionary Housing Payments in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Stockport in the latest period for which figures are available.

Navendu Mishra: [\[160849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Discretionary Housing Payments were successful in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Stockport in the latest period for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[160577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 150714 on Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment, if she will make an estimate of the number of claimants who have had their contributory based employment and support allowance payments stopped as a result of the (a) temporary suspension of face-to-face assessments for health and disability-related benefits and (b) inability to be placed in a support group as a result of suspended face-to-face assessments.

Justin Tomlinson:

I would like to refer the Honourable Member to question [154860](#) answered on 26th February 2021.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Andy McDonald: [\[160679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Questions 155053 and 155054, whether there is a threshold that defines the working population as a whole.

Mims Davies:

The answer to question [155053](#) emphasised the importance to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in making proportionate regulatory decisions in the pandemic when

considering the impact on the working age population as a whole. The working population includes anyone in legal employment. Workers above the legal working age and below state pension age account for the overwhelming majority of those in legal employment. To inform decisions about proportionate regulation, HSE statisticians have drawn on eleven data sets to give an overview of the impact on the working population. The age-differentiated data is categorised to identify people between legal working age and state pension age.

■ Employment: Disability

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[158957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the proportion of employers that publish the percentage of (a) disabled staff they employ and (b) disabled staff they employ by pay grade.

Justin Tomlinson:

In November 2018, the DWP introduced the Voluntary Reporting Framework (VRF) to encourage employers to actively report on disability employment and mental health. DWP is promoting the use of the VRF to employers across the UK; thereby encouraging employers to be more transparent and to start having open conversations about disability and health at work. We continue to work with employers and expert partners to promote its usage, including requiring new and renewing Disability Confident Leaders (Level 3) to use it. However, there is no requirement for companies to notify Government if they have signed up to the framework and are publishing this data.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Justin Madders:

[\[158103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 137230, how many applications to the Kickstart scheme have been approved by (a) region and (b) sector to date.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to PQ [145064](#).

I am pleased to announce that as of the 26th of February 2021 my department has received over 11,000 applications for funding from the Kickstart Scheme. So far there has been:

- Around 4,000 young people starting their new jobs with over 30,000 jobs made available to eligible young people;
- Over 140,000 approved jobs;
- Over 900 approved Gateway Organisations.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Public Lavatories

Stephen Timms:

[160511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Health and Safety Executive's response is to representations made to it by the Road Haulage Association on tightening guidance on the provision of toilet facilities to visiting truck drivers; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

Early in the pandemic, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produced guidance for drivers which can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/drivers-transport-delivery.htm>. In addition, HSE published a joint letter with the Department for Transport on gov.uk in May 2020, reminding businesses of their legal obligation to provide toilet and handwashing facilities to drivers visiting their premises to deliver or collect goods as part of their work. The joint letter is available to download and print, via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887867/dft-hse-letter-drivers-facilities.pdf.

This guidance continues to be reinforced with messages (for example that HSE is checking businesses in the transport sector are COVID-secure – <https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/11/23/hse-is-checking-businesses-in-the-transport-sector-are-covid-secure/> to explain expectations on businesses).

In mid-July 2020 HSE clarified that visiting workers must be allowed access to toilets in both their cleaning and hygiene guidance (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/cleaning/bathrooms-toilets-washbasins.htm>) and social distancing guidance (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/social-distancing/common-areas.htm>)

HSE has engaged extensively with industry associations and trade unions to set out the legal requirements. They used their communications channels including social media and newsletters to engage with stakeholders directly, and last year worked with other agencies such as Highways England and police forces to amplify our messaging on access to welfare facilities via their social media channels.

■ Mobility

David Linden:

[158181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee's Occasional Paper 23 on the use of public funds in supporting the mobility needs of disabled people, published on 17 November 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department welcomed the report by the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) and engaged openly with SSAC throughout the process. The Department is committed to ensuring that disabled people get the right support and will use the

upcoming Health and Disability Green paper to further explore this area. SSAC's Occasional Paper 23 made recommendations to the Department which included collaboration with colleagues in other government departments, and after some initial engagement giving consideration to the recommendations, the Department is currently in the process of formulating a formal response to SSAC.

■ Personal Care Services: Industrial Diseases

Paul Maynard:

[\[160609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council has made on its review of lung cancer and COPD in former employees in the health and beauty industry.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council ("IIAC") is independent of Government. IIAC have commissioned a review of respiratory conditions which will soon be underway and will be guided by its outcome when making any recommendations for changes to the appropriate prescriptions. As part of this, they will ensure that the review of occupational causes of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease will include hairdressing and hair products.

IIAC is in the process of tendering for an external contractor to carry out the commissioned review, it expects a successful bidder to be appointed late Spring 2021 and the review is expected to take two years to complete.

■ Post Offices: ICT

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[154890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Horizon-related prosecutions were brought by her Department prior to relinquishing that function to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Will Quince:

DWP relinquished prosecutorial functions to the Crown Prosecution Service in 2012. Due to legal document retention policies, information on individual Horizon cases is no longer available. Therefore, we cannot identify how many cases DWP sent for prosecution, nor their outcomes.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Helen Hayes:

[\[160744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will provide an update on the timetable for the publication of the Green Paper on disability benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

Given the necessary focus on the departmental response to Covid-19, we are working to a longer timescale than previously anticipated. We will continue the

engagement with disabled people and their representatives and plan to publish the formal consultation document in 2021.

■ Work Capability Assessment

Kate Osamor:

[160753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in 2020 on (a) universal credit and (b) employment and support allowance were denied a virtual telephone Work Capability Assessment, following a refusal to make a paper-based decision, because they were identified as being a claimant who is not suitable for a telephone consultation according to the specifications outlined in the CHDA COVID-19 Filework process document of 15 May 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The data you have requested is not available.

It might be helpful if I explain that on receipt of a referral, the Healthcare Professional will review each case along with any additional information provided by the claimant. A request may then be made for further medical evidence from a treating medical professional. Once all the information has been received, the Healthcare Professional may be able to provide a paper based assessment or advise on the appropriateness of a telephone assessment.

We are aware that there will be some claimants who are unable to undertake a telephone assessment because of their health condition and we are currently developing ways in which we can support these individuals. We also continue to undertake some video assessments where appropriate.

Claimants who we are unable to assess by telephone or video because of their health condition will be prioritised when we are able to safely resume face to face assessments.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:

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.

The Global Travel Taskforce last year committed the Government to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in support of the sector. The Government intends to set out proposals in the Spring, including plans for a marketing campaign to welcome visitors back to the UK as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Department for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce, with an ambition to develop a framework that can facilitate greater inbound and outbound travel as soon as the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants. It will report on 12 April.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:

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.

CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance into developing countries in Africa and South Asia since 2017. CDC's climate strategy sets out its comprehensive approach to align all of CDC's investing activities with the Paris Agreement, based on the core principles of reaching net zero by 2050, enabling a just transition and strengthening adaptation and resilience.

CDC's full energy portfolio, as of December 2019, is available online: <https://assets.cdcgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/11174306/Fossil-Fuels-and-Renewables-portfolio-as-at-31-December-2019-pdf.pdf>.

CDC has an indirect renewable energy investment in Mozambique, Enventure Africa S.A, through DI Frontier Fund 2. Investment values for individual companies are commercially sensitive and are therefore unable to be disclosed.

■ Tigray: Sexual Offences**Sarah Champion:****[157129]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict dated 21 January 2021, if he will condemn crimes of sexual violence in the Tigray Region and outline the discussions he has had with his international counterparts on condemning those crimes.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 3 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:

James Duddridge:

We note that the Government of Ethiopia has declared a zero policy on sexual violence and the stated intention to establish a national joint taskforce (including the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) to investigate alleged cases of sexual violence against women in Tigray. We will monitor the effectiveness of this taskforce in bringing perpetrators to justice. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The UK is currently working closely with its partners to ensure that survivors have an increasing access to specialised services and justice. I re-emphasised the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

We condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We also note the statement

on 21 January by Pramila Patten, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy for such crimes and we continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses. The UK is particularly concerned about the increased risks that conflict presents for women and girls in relation to gender-based violence and to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We continue to lobby for the protection of women, girls and boys at official level. We encourage the Government of Ethiopia to invite an independent UN fact finding mission to support their current accountability effort on international law compliance.

We note that the Government of Ethiopia has declared a zero policy on sexual violence and the stated intention to establish a national joint taskforce (including the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) to investigate alleged cases of sexual violence against women in Tigray. We will monitor the effectiveness of this taskforce in bringing perpetrators to justice. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The UK is currently working closely with its partners to ensure that survivors have an increasing access to specialised services and justice. I re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alzheimer's Disease and Multiple Sclerosis: Research

Valerie Vaz:

[\[137917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money from the public purse has been allocated to research into (a) Parkinson's disease, (b) Alzheimers Disease and (c) Multiple Sclerosis in each of the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 26 January 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

The Government is committed to supporting research into Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis. The Department funds research into these areas through the National Institute for Health Research. Additionally, UK Research and Innovation funds research into these areas primarily through the Medical Research Council, the Biotechnology Biological Sciences Research Council, and the Economic and Social Research Council.

The attached table shows funding allocated through these routes, not including wider funding that contributes to research in these areas. Figures for research into Alzheimer's disease are only part of overall dementia research spending.

NIH R values refer to total spend. UKRI values refer to allocated / committed funding.

Attachments:

1. PQ 137917 table formatted.docx

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **The Report of the Holliday Inquiry into the Award of the Magnox Decommissioning Contract**

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):
[\[HCWS820\]](#)

On 27 March 2017, the then Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP informed the House of the defective procurement between 2012 and 2014 of the contract for the clear up of the 12 Magnox sites, of the decision taken to settle with unsuccessful bidders following a successful legal challenge and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's decision to terminate the contract on the grounds that a material change had arisen to the specification on which bidders were invited in 2012 to tender.

The Secretary of State undertook to investigate fully and expose the reasons behind these failures so as to avoid the same mistakes being made in the future. In order to achieve this, he appointed Mr Steve Holliday to chair an independent, non-statutory inquiry. Mr Holliday's report, copies of which have been laid in the House today, delivers on that commitment.

I am grateful to Mr Holliday and his team for the comprehensive and rigorous work of this inquiry, which is reflected in this report. The team has reviewed tens of thousands of documents to get to the truth, and it is only through this diligence that we can now confidently learn from the mistakes of the past.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is charged with the delivery of a range of challenging, complex and safety-critical activities, across Magnox and the other sites in its estate. Since it was established under the Energy Act 2004, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has driven a significant step-change in the decommissioning of the UK's legacy nuclear sites.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has already acted upon the Inquiry's interim findings that were published in October 2017 and significant improvements have been put in place. This includes strengthening of its commercial and legal capabilities and the introduction, with Government support, of a board-level Programme and Projects Committee. My Department has already taken action to improve its own oversight of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority by strengthening the capacity and capability of the team in BEIS that provides the sponsorship function and also by appointing a Director from UK Government Investments onto the Board as a Government shareholder representative.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority will need to continue to develop to become a more efficient, effective and resilient organisation that continues to drive transformation on the ground and to deliver value for money for the taxpayer. I will be looking to the

organisation's Chair, Chief Executive and the other Board members to demonstrate that, where they have not already done so, they will respond fully, effectively and in a timely manner to the findings of this report. There are also findings and recommendations for my Department and UK Government Investments as well as for Government more widely which we will consider with great care.

It is my intention that the Government and the NDA will publish formal responses to the Inquiry Chair's recommendations later this year.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Business and Industry) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment) (Nadhim Zahawi): [\[HCWS825\]](#)

The lockdown has reduced social contact and, as such, the number of Covid-19 cases, hospital admissions and death rates have reduced significantly but continue to remain high across the country. As of 25 February, the weekly case rate for all ages in England is on average 97.1 per 100,000, and 65.2 per 100,000 for people aged 60 and over. Overall positivity for England is 4.3%, with rates continuing to remain higher than desired across the whole country. These figures remain high indicating that we are not yet ready to ease further restrictions immediately from an epidemiological perspective.

Data indicates that patients in hospital with COVID-19 across England has reduced to 10,765 and mechanical ventilation bed occupancy is 1,658 (as of 1 March). Sadly, between 15 February and 21 February there have been a total of 2,421 COVID 19 related deaths in England, within 28 days of a positive COVID 19 tests. The number of deaths within 28 days of a positive test has fallen and now reflect levels seen at the end of October. The Coronavirus England briefing, 4 March 2021, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-england-briefing-4-march-2021>

The vaccine rollout continues to be a success for the UK. As of 2 March, over 20.4 million people across the UK have now received their first dose of a COVID vaccine – equal to over a third of the adult population, and over 840,000 people have now received their second dose of a COVID vaccine. Daily updates on vaccines doses are available here:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

On 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a four-step roadmap to move England out of the current National Lockdown. The Government will take a cautious approach to easing restrictions which is guided by data. The measures set out for 8 March prioritise the return of face-to-face education in schools and colleges.

The full roadmap publication can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf

Progression to the next step of the roadmap will be guided by data, and not dates. There will be at least five weeks between the steps in the roadmap: four weeks for the data to show the impact of the previous easing; and one week's notice for the public and businesses ahead of future changes.

Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data on the impact of the previous step against four tests.

1. The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
2. Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
3. Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
4. Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

■ Healthy Weight Programme

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill): [\[HCWS823\]](#)

Last year, in response to growing numbers across the country living with excess weight and obesity, the Government published our new strategy, 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives'. Worryingly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, evidence has shown that people with obesity are more likely to be admitted to hospital, to an intensive care unit and, sadly, to die compared to those of a healthy body weight. This is as well as being at a heightened risk of other diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

So, today I am delighted to announce that the Government is committing an additional £100 million over 2021/22 to support people living with obesity, to lose weight and maintain a healthier lifestyle.

More than £70 million will be invested into weight management services available through the NHS and Local Authorities. The funding announced today will mean up to 700,000 adults have access to support that can help them to lose weight, from access to digital apps, weight management groups or individual coaches, to specialist clinical support. This funding will also support GPs and other health professionals to help make weight management an integral part of routine care. It will encourage clinicians to have conversations about weight with their patients and enable them to refer patients to new services.

£30 million will be used to fund a variety of initiatives that will help individuals maintain a healthy weight. This includes providing access to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app and continuing the successful Better Health marketing campaign to motivate people to make healthier choices. Some of the funding will go towards improving services and tools to support healthy growth in early years and childhood. This will assist up to 6,000

children, and their families, to grow, develop and maintain a healthier weight whilst providing many more with advice on lifestyle changes to promote a healthy weight.

Evidence suggests that people who have access to structured weight management services are more successful in losing weight than people who try to manage alone. Losing weight reduces the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and some cancers. This funding will support a breadth of new services so that people can find an approach that works for them.

I am also very pleased to announce that Sir Keith Mills, who has pioneered reward programmes through Airmiles and Nectar points, has been appointed to advise on developing a new approach, 'Fit Miles', to supporting people to eat well and move more, using incentives and rewards.

Drawing on a wealth of experience and best practice from around the world, Sir Keith will support the Government to develop and test innovative approaches with public and private partners that use incentives and rewards to help people make healthier choices.

This additional funding will complement other policies announced in last year's obesity strategy that will change the wider environment and empower people to make the healthier choices. From restricting advertisements for food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar, banning unhealthy promotions, consulting on alcohol calorie labelling, requiring large businesses to provide calorie information- these actions are helping us all make healthier choices.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with NHS England and Improvement and Public Health England ensure this programme of funding helps those who need it most. This funding will support people across the country achieve a healthier lifestyle. The Department of Health and Social Care will provide further detail on this programme of work in the coming weeks and months.

HOME OFFICE

■ Home Office 2020-21 Funding

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS821\]](#)

Net cash requirement for the year exceeds that provided by the Main Estimate, and is within that provided by the Supplementary Estimate. The Supplementary Estimate has not yet received Royal Assent.

The Contingencies Fund advance is required in order to meet commitments until the Supplementary Estimate receives Royal Assent, at which point the Home Office will be able to draw down the cash from the Consolidated Fund in the usual way, to repay the Contingencies Fund advance.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £1,250,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Home Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £1,250,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Future Borders and Immigration (Kevin Foster):

[\[HCWS822\]](#)

My Rt Hon friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

We have made a change to the Immigration Rules which will open the new Graduate route to enable international students to remain in the UK to work, or look for work, for two years (three years for doctoral students) after they have completed their studies. The route will open on 1 July 2021. All international students who have successfully completed a degree (or other qualifying course) at undergraduate level or above at a higher education provider with a track record of compliance, and who have valid Student (or Tier 4) permission, will be able to apply. The Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) will close when the Graduate route opens. The introduction of this route, which was announced in September 2019, will significantly improve the UK's offer to international students.

We are making changes to accommodate the launch of the new Graduate route. The first change is to expand the definition of a new entrant to include those switching from the Graduate route. Time spent in the Graduate route will count towards the maximum period of four years for which a person can be considered a new entrant. We are also making a change so those previously on the Student or Graduate routes, who make a short visit to the UK, do not disqualify themselves from being considered a new entrant.

We are also giving effect to some of the recommendations made by the Migration Advisory Committee in its review of the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) in September 2020. We are adding eight occupations in the health and care sector as well as modern language teachers to the UK-wide SOL. We are removing chefs from the SOL, although they will continue to be eligible for the Skilled Worker route due to the expanded skills threshold.

In addition, we are accepting the recommendation to add deck hands on large fishing vessels and vent chicken sexers, where those occupations meet experience requirements, to the list of occupations which are eligible for the Skilled Worker route.

We are updating the salary thresholds to include a minimum hourly rate to safeguard against employers who may require employees to work longer hours to make up for the lower rates of pay. We are including a transitional arrangement for those already on the Skilled Worker route in a job paying less than the minimum (£10.10 per hour) to avoid anyone losing their job as a result of the change.

We are making a change to prevent employers from reducing their Skilled Worker salaries below the level of tradeable points which have been assessed and awarded by the Home Office. If a sponsor wishes to reduce a salary based on a different set of tradeable points, a new application will be required. This ensures the Home Office has assessed and confirmed that the Skilled Worker continues to meet the requirement of the route.

We are expanding the Academic Technology Approval Scheme to include those coming to the UK under a sponsored work route to work in an occupation which includes postgraduate research in an academic environment, in certain sensitive subjects where an individual's knowledge could be used in programmes to develop advanced conventional weapon technology, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or their means of delivery. This change is designed to protect UK research from exploitation and from inadvertently supporting the proliferation of WMD or advanced conventional weapon technologies.

Some adjustments are being made to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and the EUSS family permit. These will ensure their continued operability and the full implementation of the Citizens' Rights Agreements beyond the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EUSS by those EEA citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the Transition Period. By 31 January 2021, more than 5 million applications to the EUSS had been received and more than 4.5 million grants of status had been issued.

We are making changes to the Global Talent route to enable applicants who have reached the pinnacle of their careers to bypass the endorsement requirement and instead qualify if they have received a prestigious prize. An initial list of prizes have been identified and agreed by the endorsing bodies for the route based on their expert opinion and represent the leading awards in their respective fields.

Applicants meeting this requirement will not be required to apply for endorsement, which should expedite the application process. In all other aspects, the requirements and conditions applying to individuals relying on a prestigious prize will be consistent with those who qualify using an exceptional talent endorsement, including having a three year qualifying period for settlement and identical conditions applied to their permission.

There are currently two separate schemes to assist current and former Locally Employed Staff (LES) in Afghanistan: the Ex-Gratia Scheme (EGS) and the intimidation policy. The existing intimidation policy is available to any current or former Afghan LES who have been employed directly by the UK Government in Afghanistan since 2001, from the first day of their employment, regardless of their role, job or length of service. This is being replaced with the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for current and former Afghan LES to reflect the changing security situation in Afghanistan and the risk faced by current and former LES there. The EGS will continue to operate without change until the closing date of 30 November 2022 already set out in the Immigration Rules.

The ARAP moves away from the present policy model which is based on the investigation of alleged cases of intimidation and requires discrete evidence, and into an assessment-oriented approach. This will be grounded in a recognition that the situation in Afghanistan has evolved and poses a latent threat to many current and former LES in particular roles. Other assistance, e.g. internal moves in-country and bespoke security advice, will still be available where appropriate and reflects that not all LES are able or willing to relocate.

An amendment is being made to clarify the grounds for refusal policy intention that permission may only be refused or cancelled on the basis of rough sleeping where the

person has repeatedly refused offers of support and engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour

Finally, a change is being made to Appendix Hong Kong British National (Overseas) which will allow those on the British National (Overseas) route to apply to vary their conditions to have their no recourse to public funds condition lifted where they are able to demonstrate they are destitute or at imminent risk of destitution.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Update: State Pension Correction Exercise

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion. (Guy Opperman): [\[HCWS824\]](#)

This statement provides an update to the House on uplifts to State Pension which has been a matter of Parliamentary interest since 2020.

We are committed to making sure that those people found to have been underpaid State Pension receive the money they are rightly entitled to.

We became aware of issues with State Pension underpayments in 2020 and we took immediate action to investigate the extent of the problem. This is an issue that dates back many years across successive Governments.

Rectifying these cases is a priority for the Department and we will do it as quickly as possible.

From August 2020 to January 2021 the Department carried out a number of complex scans of legacy computer systems that analysed many millions of State Pension records. The scans identified cases requiring further investigation.

These cases can be categorised into the following groups:

- People who are married or in a civil partnership who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016 and may be entitled to a Category BL uplift based on their partner's National Insurance contributions.

Following a change in the law in 2008, when their spouse became entitled to a State Pension, some people should have had their basic State Pension automatically reviewed and uplifted. Underpayments occurred in cases when this did not happen.

- People who have been widowed and their State Pension was not uplifted to include amounts they are entitled to inherit from their late husband, wife or civil partner.
- People who have not been paid Category D State Pension uplift as they should have been from age 80.

For each group of individuals affected, DWP IT systems produce an electronic prompt to consider if an individual's State Pension amount should be increased. The prompt requires DWP staff to take further manual action and, in some cases, this did not take place.

Following the scan activity, the Department formally commenced a correction exercise on 11 January 2021, clerically examining each of the cases identified through the scans. We have already reallocated a number of staff onto this work and are exploring urgently what else we can do to speed up the process.

Given the complexity of the work, it can take time to assess the most complex cases. This work involves a thorough examination of the State Pension payments, and consideration of any changes to the individual's circumstances since the original State Pension award was made, to establish if an underpayment has occurred.

Where underpayments are identified, the Department will contact the individual to inform them of the changes to their State Pension amount and of any arrears payment they will receive in accordance with the law.

The Department's current estimate of the total costs of repaying these arrears is £2.7bn. There will also be increased expenditure on corrected live cases of around £90m per year on average in the coming years. This estimate is based on the system scans and analysis of DWP administrative data. As more information becomes available from the correction exercise, we will refine our estimates.

In addition to the formal correction exercise, the Department is continuing to review thoroughly all State Pension records where an individual has contacted the Pension Service.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that any historical errors, unaddressed by previous Governments, are put right as quickly as possible.

I will update Parliament as the correction exercise progresses.